

JUSTIFICATION--OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE:

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JUSTIFICATION--OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE:

A Translation of the Doctrinal Essay Read at
the First Convention of the Synodical Conference in 1872

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A further topic which occupied the Conference animatedly were theses

ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

To this absolutely necessary piece of doctrine (Lehrstueck) the Conference devoted seven of its sessions--with special reference to a controversy that had broken out between the Norwegian Lutheran and the Augustana synods.

Thesis 1: "The doctrine of justification is the most eminent chief article of the Christian faith, one the right understanding of which is for the salvation of the individual--and the pure proclamation of which is for the welfare of the church as a whole--of incomparable importance and absolute necessity."

Thesis 2: "The Reformation of the Church through Dr. Luther had its starting point in a renewed understanding, by God's grace, of the pure evangelical doctrine of justification and in a corresponding uncorrupted proclamation of this article of faith."

Thesis 3: "In the pure doctrine of justification, as our Lutheran church has presented it again from God's Word and placed it on the lamp-stand, it is above all a matter of three points: 1) Of the doctrine of the universal, perfect redemption (Erloesung) of the world through Christ; 2) Of the doctrine of the power and efficacy of the means of grace; and 3) Of the doctrine of faith."

These three theses are largely of an introductory character, and what is emphasized here is that the article of justification is the kernel and star (Kern und Stern) of all doctrine, into which all other doctrines have grown together (hineingewachsen), and out of which they again flow. On this article all salvation depends, and therefore it is absolutely necessary for every Christian. It would not help anyone to know accurately all other doctrines, e.g. those of the Holy Trinity, of the Person of Christ, etc., if he did not know and believe this one. An error in any other article would not do as much harm to the soul of the Christian as an error in this doctrine. And as it is with the individual Christian, so also matters stand for the whole church. This article is indispensable for her if she is to lead souls out of the devil's power into God's Kingdom. When we speak of justification, we are speaking of the Christian religion, for the doctrine of the Christian religion is none other than the revelation of God about how one becomes righteous before God and is saved through the redemption which has happened in Christ Jesus. All other religions show other ways which are supposed to lead to heaven. The one requires doing good works and so earning heaven; the other demands being virtuous, or being useful to the world, in order to obtain salvation. The Christian religion alone shows another way to heaven through its doctrine of justification, and this is something unheard of and unsuspected for the entire world, thoughts which had been hidden in the heart of God before the foundation of the world. Therefore all other doctrines lose their significance, if the doctrine of justification is not right. It can be a matter of indifference to us whether the essence of God consists in three

or six Persons, so long as we must fear Him as the jealous God over us sinners. Only when we know and believe that we poor sinners are reconciled (versoehnt) with God the Father by grace through Christ and obtain the righteousness which counts before God only through that faith which the Holy Spirit alone works, only then does the doctrine of the Holy Trinity become a doctrine full of comfort and salvation. Whoever therefore attacks this doctrine, violates for us the whole doctrine, the whole Bible, the whole Christian religion. As long as this doctrine is quite pure among us, no error in other points can cling to us. It is as Luther says repeatedly: "This doctrine tolerates no error." It is the sun in the sky of the church, and where it rises, all shadows must vanish. Our Book of Concord says about this in the Apology, Article IV:

In this controversy the main doctrine of Christianity is involved; when it is properly understood, it illumines and magnifies the honour of Christ and brings to pious consciences the abundant consolation that they need. We therefore ask His Imperial Majesty kindly to hear us out on this important issue. For since they understand neither the forgiveness of sins nor faith nor grace nor righteousness, our opponents confuse this doctrine miserably, they obscure the glory and the blessings of Christ, and they rob pious consciences of the consolation offered them in Christ (Apol. IV, 2, 3, Tappert, p. 107).

These words we must repeat in our time. Not only the papists at that time shamefully defiled this well of salvation, but the same was done again by all the sects which arose after the Reformation. Of course nowadays this is largely no longer believed. But we must energetically oppose the unionism of our time, when it is so easy to be seduced into believing: In the doctrine of justification we are of course agreed with the Methodists, Presbyterians, etc., even though not of course in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, of the Person of Christ, etc. We must testify that no shadow of the right doctrine of justification is found in the doctrinal systems peculiar to the sects. Of course, the words they also pronounce: we become righteous by grace alone through faith; but no sooner have they said this than they point man to his repentance, his struggling and contending, his holiness, and it becomes apparent that they want to bring man to heaven through his own efforts after all. But whoever does that takes from us the divine Light which alone can shine for us in this world's night of sin, and leaves us in abominable darkness. Therefore: "Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth should be destroyed. For as St. Peter says, 'There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). 'And with his stripes we are healed' (Isa. 53:5). On this article rests all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubts about it. Otherwise all is lost, and the pope, the devil, and all our adversaries will gain the victory" (Smalcald Articles, II, I, 5, Tappert, p. 292).

These words we should all know by heart. For the sake of this article the pope calls us heretics and the sects say, when we preach it, that we are impeding conversion and making people secure. They prevail against us therefore, as soon as we yield to them in this article. The Formula of Concord says in the article of justification:

In the words of the Apology, this article of justification by faith is "the chief article of the entire Christian doctrine," "without which no poor conscience can have any abiding comfort or rightly understand the riches of the grace of Christ." In the same vein Dr. Luther declared: "Where this single article remains pure, Christendom will remain pure, in beautiful harmony, and without any schisms. But where it does not remain pure, it is impossible to repel any error or heretical spirit. And St. Paul says specifically of this doctrine that a little leaven ferments the whole lump. Therefore he stresses the exclusive terms, that is, the terms by which all human works are excluded, such as, "without the law," "without works," "by grace alone." He stresses these terms with such zeal in order to indicate how very important it is that in this article, side by side with the true doctrine, we clearly segregate, expose, and condemn the false contrary doctrine (Tappert, p. 540).

The battle against false doctrine wins practical significance for the individual Christian only when he sees how through the falsification of other points also this doctrine cannot remain pure. Quite beautifully Luther proves in his book of councils and churches, that combined for instance with the Nestorian-Zwinglian doctrine of the Person of Christ, the doctrine of justification cannot possibly remain pure.* He proves that the doctrine of justification is indeed destroyed by the godless Reformed doctrine that not God died on the cross, but only the Man Christ. Let someone who adheres to this error try to comfort himself in death's peril with the blood of a mere man! There

* "We Christians," he writes, "must know this: If God is not in the balance to provide the weight, then we with our dish sink to the bottom. I mean this: If it were not the case that God died for us, but only a man, then we are lost. But when God's death, and God-died lie in the balance-dish, then He sinks down and we soar up, as a light, empty dish" (XVI, 2728). Luther writes similarly of the Zwinglian alloeosis, according to which Scripture is supposed to name the Divinity, but mean the humanity: "Beware, beware, I say, of the alloeosis; it is the devil's mask. For it finally confects the sort of Christ after Whom I should not very much like to be a Christian, namely that Christ should henceforth be no more, nor do anything more with His suffering and life than some other mere saint. For if I believe this, that only the human nature has suffered for me, then Christ is a poor Saviour to me; indeed He then likely is Himself in need of a Saviour. . . His vanity and the accursed alloeosis have brought him to the point where he divides the Person of Christ, and leaves us no other Christ than a mere man to have died for us and redeemed us. What Christian heart can hear or tolerate this sort of thing? Thereby the whole Christian faith and all the world's salvation are taken away completely, and the world is damned. For whoever is redeemed through humanity alone, will nevermore be redeemed" (Great Confession, XX, 1180.1206 ff.).

nothing yields comfort except the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, shed for the sins of the world--one droplet of which is worth more than all money, goods, and work of men, yes, more than heaven and earth. And just as in this article, so one could prove in all articles, that where one is attacked, there the doctrine of justification is violated at the same time. This article is often called the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae (the article of the standing and falling church), and that indeed it is. Luther speaks thus about this: "This is the highest article of our faith. If now it is either taken away, as is done by the Jews, or falsified, as by the papists, then neither can the church endure nor God retain His glory. Which glory is this, that He is gracious and merciful, and that He wills to forgive us our sins and to save us for the sake of His Son" (On Gen. 21:17). Further: "So long as the church confessed this article, she remained in the faith; and the faith was brighter in one age and darker in another. He Himself says in Mt. 28:20: I am with you always, till the end of the world. Without this article the church does not stand. Mohammed indeed devastated the church, and the pope obscured the doctrine of faith, but where this article remained, there God preserved His church" (Walch VI, 1156). Further: "This article they (the papists) simply will not tolerate; thus we cannot do without it. For where this article is gone, there the church is gone and no error can be resisted, because without this article the Holy Spirit will not and cannot be with us, for He is to glorify Christ to us. Over this article the world has so often gone to ruin, through the Flood, storms, inundations, war, and all plagues. Over this article Abel was killed, and all the saints, and all Christians too must die over it. Nevertheless it has remained and must remain, and the world must ever perish over it. So now too the world will have to put up with it and be overturned over this article; and if the world turned mad and raving, it will still have to let this article stand, while the world itself sinks to the bottom of hell over it. Amen" (XVI, 2015).

Further, to Is. 42:22: "Therefore this article of justification, which we alone nowadays teach, is to be learnt with care and preserved. For if we have lost this article, we shall be able to resist no heresy, no false doctrine, no matter how ridiculous and vain it were; just as it used to be the case under the papacy, when we believed such things of which we are now ashamed and of which we repent. Again, if we remain with this article, then we are safe from heresy and retain the forgiveness of sins, which does not hold our weakness in behaviour and faith against us" (VI, 827). Further, Luther writes to Brenz: "This point is the chief part and the cornerstone, which alone gives birth to the church of God, and strengthens, builds, preserves and defends her; and without it the church of God cannot survive one hour" (XIV, 191).

That the article of justification is the one of the standing and falling church is very easy to prove to those who have the right doctrine of the church. For what, after all, is the church? It is the totality of believing Christians. There is the church, therefore, where Christ rules and reigns in grace; but He reigns internally in man, in that He offers and imparts to him grace. Wherever He has conquered a heart, there is His Kingdom. But no man becomes a true, regenerated Christian without this doctrine of justification. Every other doctrine can make great Pharisees--but no Christians. One becomes a Christian only by having it made manifest in the heart through the Holy Ghost that one is truly redeemed through Christ, has forgiveness of sins, a reconciled heavenly Father, the righteousness which counts before God, and can therefore lie down

confidently upon one's death-bed. Everything else, which does not lead a man to this confidence of the heart produces hypocrisy and godlessness. Therefore it is not the high art of human wisdom that is necessary to show people the way to heaven, but above all the faithful holding fast to this article. If only he who stands in the pulpit retains this article pure, if only his whole sermon is dominated by this thought, that one must be saved only through Christ: if he would then slip here and there in form or even in expression, that would do no harm; whilst another, who does not live in this article, can preach quite nicely and properly according to form, yet nevertheless does not lead his congregation into real consolation and the necessary joyfulness. Perhaps he himself, and his congregation with him, are surprised that the fruit will not follow; the lack is assuredly in this article. Summa: Where this article is, there certainly Christ is, there are Christians, there is the church of Christ; where it is not, there also is no church.

In the second thesis it is pointed out how it was just this doctrine of justification out of which God began His work of Reformation through Luther. Luther would never have become the Reformer of the church, had he not come to a correct understanding of precisely this article. Many who had lived before him had also wanted to reform the church, but it is apparent that they lacked just this foundation, from which alone the church can be reformed, and so they had no success. But it pleased God to let this light dawn upon Luther, and to lead him from there to ever greater clarity. He worked in him a despairing of his own merits and led him by and by--partly through the reading of Holy Scripture and partly through the writings of Augustine--to the appropriation of the merit of Christ, and in this way to the realization of how hellish a darkness ruled in the papacy. He saw that it was taught there--in direct contradiction to the doctrine of justification through Christ--that man is to become righteous through the work of the Law, and that the Gospel was made into a new kind of Law. The path which God pursued with Luther, becomes evident from the following passage in Luther's writings:

I indeed had a sincere yearning and desire to understand St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans properly. And nothing had till then prevented this, except only the single little word justitia Dei (righteousness of God) in the first chapter, verse 17, where Paul says: the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. I was very hostile towards this word "righteousness of God," and according to the usage and custom of all doctors I was not otherwise informed and instructed than that I had to understand it in the philosophical manner of the sort of righteousness in which God is righteous in Himself, does and works right, and punishes all sinners and unrighteous ones, which righteousness is called the essential (formalem) or actual (activam) righteousness. Now things stood thus with me: Although I lived as a holy and blameless monk, I nevertheless considered myself a great sinner before God, and in addition I had an anxious and restless conscience, and could not make bold to reconcile God with my satisfaction and merits. For this reason I did not at all love this

righteous and wrathful God, Who punishes sin, but I hated Him and (though this neither was nor is to be regarded as blasphemy) was secretly and with real earnestness angry with God, saying often: Is it not enough for God that He, beside the Law's threats and terrors, places all sorts of misery and sorrow of this life upon us poor, miserable sinners, who are already condemned to eternal death through original sin? Must He yet increase this misery and heartache through the Gospel, and through the preaching and voice of the same further threaten and proclaim His righteousness and earnest wrath? Here I was often infuriated in my confused conscience; yet I would repeatedly ponder what dear Paul meant at this place, and had a hearty thirst and desire to know it. With such thoughts I spent day and night, till through God's grace I noticed how the words were connected, namely thus: The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel, as it is written: the righteous one lives of his faith. From this I learnt to understand this righteousness of God, in which the righteous one by God's grace and gift lives solely out of faith, and I realized that this was the Apostle's meaning: through the Gospel there is revealed that righteousness which is valid before God, in which God justifies us out of grace and pure mercy through faith. This is called in Latin justitia passiva, as it is written: the righteous one lives of his faith. Here I felt at once that I had been born quite anew, and had now found a wide-open door, leading into Paradise itself. And now the dear holy Scripture looked quite different to me than before. I soon ran through the whole Bible, as much as I could remember of it, and gathered together according to this rule all its interpretations also of other terms, such as: God's work, that means what God Himself works in us; God's power, with which He makes us strong and powerful; God's wisdom, with which He makes us wise; likewise the others: God's strength, God's salvation, God's glory, and the like. Now, just as I had before earnestly hated this little word, "God's righteousness," so now I began, on the contrary, to esteem the same highly, as my very dearest and most comforting word, and that place in St. Paul was for me the very gate of Paradise (XIV, 460-462).

Also with the words, "in my heart there rules alone and shall rule this single article" (VIII, 1529), Luther enunciated clearly enough that nothing other than this doctrine had guided him in the Reformation. Also in other countries and at other times it has been this doctrine which has renewed the church. Luther had indeed soon recognized many abominations of the papacy, but he had still held a false doctrine of the church and therefore thought, who was he to presume to rise in rebellion against the holy church? That he may nevermore do; rather he must lie low. Only when it became clear to him that the righteousness which is revealed in the Gospel is that which God gives and with which He makes the sinner righteous, were the gates of Paradise opened to him, and now he was able like a hero to stand up to the papacy and all its seductions. But what happens when one no longer has this doctrine pure, is very evident in this country. What abominable and silly errors arise here, and find followers! Why? Because if someone no longer has the right standard

for truth and error, he may well think at first: the passages on which the errorists rely can hardly say what is alleged of them. But if he falls into the hands of a clever fox, who knows how to make the matter plausible to him, he nevertheless falls into the error. We must therefore have a standard which, if we are guided by it, makes it impossible for us to accept an error. But this standard is the doctrine of justification. He who has recognized it, laughs at all learned unbelieving and half-believing professors with all their rhetoric and scholarship, if they teach falsely. If what they posit and say does not accord with his children's text: "The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sins," then even the most simple-minded treads it underfoot and calls it devil's dung, no matter how great an aura of wisdom or holiness it may have. That was the reason why Luther became such an invincible Reformer. Had he failed here, then of course even a man like Erasmus could have overthrown him. But since he stood on this rock, he laughed at the pope's scholars, and at Zwingli as well. As ever new seductive spirits stood up against him, he tested them according to this Article, and if they did not accord with it, he said: Depart to him who sent you. But this doctrine must be assimilated by us in such a manner that it becomes the principle of our faith, of our life, and of the whole conduct of our office-- then too our congregations will become confident and cheerful, for when they notice that we make them certain of their salvation, then we are their best friends. What does it help them if we are very eloquent people, very popular preachers, very dignified pastors? Certainly very little. But if they can say: our pastor has made us certain of our salvation, we know now in Whom we have believed: then they have the best portion for time and eternity; then also they will no longer consider churches and synods as clerical institutions which consume much, but don't benefit anybody, but they know then that it is always a matter of bearing to them and to the whole world the glad tidings: You are redeemed and saved! Only believe it, only accept it! And then they will willingly help with their gifts towards the spreading of this message.

As important as this doctrine is, it can nevertheless be preached in its fulness and in all its power, in its clarity and consoling richness, also by such as are less gifted. When the Reformation began, what sort of preachers were available? What sort of troops, in other words, to place in opposition to the devil and his kingdom? It looked miserable enough in this respect, so that from a human point of view one would have had to say: You poor Luther, go into your cell and hide, because you're not going to achieve anything with your poor bankrupt little priests. Yet, lo and behold, they had the article pure, that man becomes righteous by grace through faith alone, and thereby they were an invincible and victorious force. Our situation is similar. However many poor young students may go forth from our institutions, who are so weak that if one compares them with those who were graduated two hundred years ago, one might despair--yet we need not despair. For even the weakest one, if only he has grasped the doctrine that the grace of God for all men has appeared in Christ Jesus, and is received through faith, can so preach to the people that they become certain of their salvation. And that outweighs all the wisdom and all the gifts and all the treasures of the world. Such preachers, too, will never run out of subject matter. They will always know to speak of that which God has, by grace, done for us, and that will give them ever new joy. For what is all scholarship, necessary as it is in its place, compared to the

wisdom of God, which is proclaimed if only the text "God so loved the world, etc." is interpreted. At this poor sinners rejoice, at this all the holy angels marvel, before this the whole world ought to fall to its knees and shout Gloria and Alleluia. If our rising generation of church-servants will preach this, then they are the people who can begin a Reformation also in this country--as indeed a small beginning has already been made in this direction. For that makes for truly living congregations, not such as make a big noise about their life and their deeds, but such as, living in this doctrine, willingly sacrifice to God in holy vesture. In sum: Let us learn from Luther that we cannot start a Reformation here, unless we believe this doctrine firmly, and proclaim, maintain, and defend it with divine certainty.

In the third thesis attention is directed chiefly to three points:

1) to the doctrine of the universal (allgemeine--general) redemption of the world, 2) to the doctrine of the means of grace, and 3) to the doctrine of faith. For when one wishes to present the whole doctrine of justification, one speaks as a rule of three causes, that is, if one wants to describe the whole doctrine by means of the principle of causes. One then asks first of all, what is the efficient (bewirkende) cause, what the motivating (bewegende) cause, and finally, what the instrumental cause, through which that which the efficient cause has intended for me, comes into my possession? That first cause of justification is the Triune God; but that everyone admits who still wants to speak of justification at all; therefore we shall not pursue this further. The second cause is a twofold one, an internal and an external. The internal cause is God's grace and mercy; this again no one denies, not even the pope. But now comes a new question, namely: which is the external motivating cause? There we say: That is the redemption of Jesus Christ, this moves the dear God to declare us poor accursed sinners righteous. Of the instrumental causes there are again two kinds, the one kind from God's side, the other from the side of man. From God's side they are Word and Sacrament. And here all parties already diverge. From the side of man it is faith, and here there is a truly Babylonian confusion among the sects, when it comes to the point of explaining what faith is. To one it is something happening in the understanding, to the other, what he experiences in his emotions, etc. If therefore we want to become conscious of our unity, then it will obviously be first of all a matter of the external motivating cause of justification, that is, of the redemption, and also of the instrumental causes, that is, of Word and Sacrament and of faith. If we are agreed (einig) in these points, then we are also truly agreed in the whole doctrine; for in these points all the differences in Christendom are to be found. It is true that one cannot contemplate this doctrine without contemplating also man's total depravity, for the sake of which he is by nature a child of wrath and condemnation. Yet our attention must focus above all on how lost and condemned man becomes righteous and is saved.

Thesis 4: "As in Adam all men have fallen and come under the wrath of God and eternal damnation as punishment for sins, so also all men are truly redeemed from sin, death, devil and hell, in Christ as the second Adam, and God is truly reconciled with them all."

In this thesis it is stated that just as in Adam the Fall and its consequences have come upon all men, and that they all thus take part in this Fall,

so also the redemption, which has happened through Jesus Christ, has happened not only for some few people, but across-the-board (schlechthin) for all men, thus also for those who are lost. This Holy Scripture proves when it speaks of the redemption through Christ without restriction and ascribes to it the same sort of universality as to the Fall of Adam. "Christ," says the Apostle, "is the propitiation (Versoehnung) for our sins, but not only for ours, but also for the sin of the whole world." I John 2:2. And in John 1:29 He is called "the Lamb of God Who bears the sin of the world." Of Him it is said in 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ and reconciled the world with Himself and did not impute their sin to them, etc." and Col. 1:20: "that everything might be reconciled through Him to Himself," and that "He by God's grace tasted death for all," Heb. 2:9. All these texts teach that the redemption which has happened through Christ has happened for all. By way of explanation of the words: Christ is the second Adam, what the Apology says is useful:

"But the world was subject to him through the law; for by the commandment of the law all are accused and by the works of the law none is justified, that is, by the law sin is recognised but its guilt is not relieved. The law would seem to be harmful since it has made all men sinners, but when the Lord Jesus came He forgave all men the sin that none could escape and by shedding his blood canceled the bond that stood against us (Col. 2:14). This is what Paul says, 'Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more' (Rom. 5:20) through Jesus. For after the whole world was subjected, he took away the sin of the whole world, as John testified when he said (John 1:29), 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (IV, 103, Tappert, pp. 121-122)

Of course the parallelism between Adam and Christ must not be pushed too far, for in one respect it is different with grace as compared with the curse. As soon as a man is a man he is indeed in possession of the curse, but he is not similarly also at once in possession of the merit of Christ. The treasure is indeed there for all men, the debt of all is paid, so that in the blood of Christ all men's righteousness, life, and salvation are brought back; but in order to come into personal possession of these goods, man must acknowledge the work of Christ, accept His grace, believe, and in so far there is a difference between Adam and Christ. Adam was not a mediator but a forefather, who propagated death in his natural children; but Christ does not propagate life through natural descent, but spiritually, when sinful man acknowledges his work and accepts his salvation, which happens through faith. Thus we must accept the payment of Christ, which is laid down (dargelegt--presented) for all, as our possession, and comfort ourselves with the same, so that it be imputed to us as individuals. After all, it does not say: as by one man all men are begotten in sin, so also through one they are all begotten righteous again, but thus it says: "As through the sin of one condemnation has come upon all men, so also through the righteousness of one justification of life has come upon (ueber) all men. For just as through one man's disobedience many became sinners, so also through one man's obedience many become righteous" Rom. 5:18,19. The comparison therefore consists in this: As sin and condemnation have come upon all through Adam, so righteousness and salvation are come upon all through Christ; as death is come upon all through Adam, so life through Christ. The universality of the redemption, however, is to be regarded about as one says about a number of slaves who have been bought free

(losgekauft), as soon as the money is paid for them: they are all free, although if they do not accept the liberation (Loesung), they are not free as individual persons. They are free according to the intention of him who bought them free, but they remain captive on account of their ill will. Thus Christ has liberated all men, the slaves of death, devil, and hell, for He has paid everything which could be demanded from them, so that none need any longer be a slave; yet most remain in captivity because they do not consider His ransom complete. Therefore what condemns now, after Christ's death and resurrection, is not so much this or that sin, as unbelief, which is the sin of all sins. Therefore also the Lord says: "The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin," and adds at once: "of sin, because they believe not in Me,"--to show that after He, the Son of God, has made us free, the debt of the entire world is truly satisfied. This also the Resurrection of Christ especially attests. What was the Resurrection of Christ? It was an act of God, through which Christ was declared righteous. But Christ had gone into death loaded down not with sins of His own, but with the sins of the whole world and with all its unrighteousness. For the sake of these sins He was sentenced by the Father, and this sentence was executed upon Him; therefore He sank into death. When the Father now raised Him up again, He thereby declared: the debt is paid, He is righteous. As little however as it was Christ who was condemned for His own Person--but rather mankind, whose sins He bore--so little also Christ became righteous for His own Person through the Resurrection; rather, mankind, for whom He died and rose, became righteous.

If it be asked how this is to be rhymed that on the one hand Scripture teaches that through Christ's resurrection the whole world is absolved, and that on the other hand it testifies that the debt remains on the unbelievers, as long as they continue in unbelief, it must be answered: One must distinguish two ways in which God regards men. When God regards the world in Christ, His Son, He looks at it with the most fervent love; but when He regards the world outside of Christ, then He cannot look at it otherwise than with burning wrath. Whoever therefore does not believe in Christ, yes rejects Christ, upon him the wrath of God remains, despite the fact that when God regards him in His Son, and remembers how He has made satisfaction also for him, then He looks upon him with eyes full of love; as Scripture says in John 3:16: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." According to this God did two things, He was wroth towards sinners, and at the same time He loved them so ardently that He gave His only-begotten Son for them. If now He loved the world already from eternity, how certainly He will still love it now, after He has been rendered satisfaction! When God now looks at the world in this respect, in which satisfaction has been made for it and its debt paid by His Son, then He sees it as a reconciled world. But now the individual comes along and rejects this reconciliation: him God cannot regard otherwise than with eternal burning wrath, since he is without Christ. Speaking according to the acquisition of salvation, He is wroth with no man any longer, but speaking according to the appropriation (Zueignung), He is wroth with everyone who is not in Christ. One may say therefore: In so far as a man is a part of the whole redeemed mankind, God is not wroth with him, but in so far as he is for his own person an unbeliever, God is wroth with him. But here lies an inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery. For in God there are no movements (Bewegungen), as in us men, who are minded now this way now that, have now these emotions, now those. Of Him it is written:

"You remain as You are." But everything that God thinks and wills is one with His Being (Wesen, essence). Just this unity and immutability of God, with what holy Scripture ascribes to Him against the sinner, when he does not believe, and again when he believes, is an impenetrable mystery, which is why we are not in a position to form a clear notion of how God can love the whole world and yet at the same time be wroth against the individual unbeliever. But Scripture clearly teaches both. Now it is the Lutheran way: if we find two sorts of things in God's Word, which we cannot rhyme, then we let both stand and believe both, just as it reads. Yet in this there is no contradiction, that Holy Scripture teaches both: God loves the world and hates the unbelievers; one must simply add mentally (hinzugedacht): in another respect. It is similar to when we say: man is mortal and he is also not mortal. Mortal he is in respect of his bodily constitution, and he is not mortal in respect of his immaterial constitution.

Christ has placed himself in the place of the whole world, and has made satisfaction for it. So now the great God thinks of the world, and in so far as He does this, His Fatherly heart is inclined towards all; but of course not outside of Christ. When he considers the unbelieving world outside of Christ, then the fire of His wrath flames over them to eternity. Yes, if it were possible, His wrath must now be even greater than when it was kindled by the transgression of the Law. If it be asked whether one can say that the totality of mankind indeed is absolved, but not individuals, it must be answered: God is reconciled through Christ with all and with every individual. Yet a judgment must be pronounced over every individual person, either of absolution or of condemnation. Luther says about this:

The dearest and most comforting doctrine of the Gospel says nothing of works, which are commanded in God's Law or by men; but it preaches and teaches only of the incomprehensible, inexpressible mercy and love of God, which He has shown towards us unworthy and condemned sinners; namely that He, the most kindly, most merciful Father saw that we were so pitifully oppressed powerfully held down by the curse of the Law, so that by our own powers we could not have worked our way out in all eternity, nor redeemed or liberated ourselves from it. And therefore He sent His only-begotten Son into the world, threw all sins of all men on Him, and said to Him thus: You are Peter, who denied, Paul, who persecuted, blasphemed, and practised all violence, David, who committed adultery, etc., also the sinner who ate the apple in Paradise, the murderer who hung on the cross, in sum, You shall be what all men are, as if You alone had committed all men's sins; therefore consider now how You will pay and make satisfaction for them. There comes at once the Law, accuses Him and says: Here I find this One among the sinners, yes, Him Who has taken all men's sins upon Himself and carries them, and besides this I see no sin in the whole world, anymore, except on Him alone; therefore He shall yield Himself and die the death of the Cross. Thus the Law with its accusation and terror presses upon Him with full force and slays Him. Through this innocent death of Christ the whole world is purified and released from sin and thereby redeemed from death and from

all evil. Since now through this one Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, sin and death have been taken away, the whole world would indeed be so pure that our Lord God could see nothing in it except pure righteousness and holiness--if only we could believe it. And even if something of sin should still remain, God still would not be able to see such sins for this clear, bright sun, which is Christ. There is no lack on that side; for Christ has carried the sin of the whole world, made satisfaction for it; but the lack is in us, who believe it weakly. If we believed it completely, we should indeed already be saved and in Paradise. But the old sack that still hangs about our neck does not let us come to such certain faith. Therefore it is highly necessary that we press unceasingly the article of the righteousness which we have in Christ, and make it great and glorious against the righteousness which comes out of the Law and works; although there is likely no language and rhetoric in the whole world, which can adequately grasp its greatness and glory, much less exhaust it. And just this argument which St. Paul treats here is very fitting and powerful against all sorts of righteousness of the law, not to mention the straw righteousness of human ordinances. For of these two things one must certainly and indisputably be true: Namely, if all the world's sins lie on the single man Jesus Christ, as the Holy Spirit testifies through Isaiah 53:6, then of course they do not lie on the world; but if they do not lie on Him, then, without fail, they must certainly still lie on the world. Again, if Christ Himself has become guilty of all our sins, which we have ever committed, then we are indeed absolved, free, and acquitted of all sins; but this has not happened through ourselves, our works or merit, but through Him; but if He is innocent and does not bear our sins, then we must bear them ourselves, and die and eternally perish under them, as under a heavy and unbearable burden. To God be praise and thanks, Who has given us victory and conquest through Jesus Christ, our dear Lord, Amen" (Galatians Commentary, VIII, pp. 2172ff.).

The fanatics usually imagine the matter like this, that our dear Lord Jesus Christ suffered, died, and rose and in general brought about what Scripture calls reconciliation, in order that the dear God might now be able to take a man to heaven simply for the sake of his conversion. They do not believe that through Christ everything without exception has happened which had to happen in order for God to be able to save us and give us eternal life; but that through Christ everything has happened and that God therefore gives us heaven free and gratis, without our contribution, that they do not believe. Something, they think, still remains for man to do, and this something, they think, is conversion. But Scripture teaches that Christ has done all, and has already acquired for us reconciliation with God, righteousness, entitlement to be children of God, that it lies there in readiness and is distributed in the holy Christian church through the Gospel. Now no one needs to do

anything more than to accept salvation. For righteousness is there, the reconciliation of God with all men has happened, and now nothing more is to be done than that man comfort himself with what Christ has done. This is what we want to say when we speak of an accomplished redemption. Not that man already has something and God waives the rest, nor that God has done something and man adds what is lacking, but that God has, quite alone, already done everything. When Lutherans who otherwise use Lutheran ways of speaking deny that God is reconciled with the whole world, then they must again and again deny what they have admitted. The wrathful God after all cannot offer forgiveness, but only that God who, as He has revealed it in the Gospel, loves all in Christ, because they have been acquired through Him. Of course the man who is to be saved must be converted, but this conversion is not that for the sake of which God saves, but the way in which the man who does nothing but that he accepts the completed and already given redemption, comes to faith.

The benefits of the Kingdom of God are there not only for those who are in that Kingdom, but they are there and have been acquired for all. There is room for all, but not all come into possession of this room. Those who oppose the doctrine of the perfection (Vollkommenheit) of the redemption of Christ, usually say: Yes, Christ has redeemed us all, but we are perfectly redeemed only when we believe. But those who say that do not at all consider what they are maintaining. For if I am to be saved through believing that I am redeemed, that I am reconciled with God, that my sins are forgiven me, then all that must already be there beforehand. Surely no man will be so foolish as to think that through his believing that something happens, he causes it actually to happen; whoever thought thus would be a superstitious person. But that a Christian is not, therefore he believes what has happened. As surely therefore as God's Word assures us that we are to become righteous, to be reconciled with God and saved through faith, so surely all these things must be there already before my faith, and they simply wait for me to accept them. When we maintain: what you are to believe must already be there beforehand, we do not by any means want to give people the comfort: even if you do not believe, that won't do any harm, you can still slip into heaven regardless, because satisfaction has been made for you. No, rather we testify to them that their damnation, if they do not believe, will therefore be all the more terrible, because God has already set the table and prepared everything, but they would not come; therefore none of the despisers shall taste of His supper. But that man becomes righteous through faith alone is possible because that which is necessary for being saved is already there and has been performed (geleistet), so that from my side only the acceptance is necessary. But it is just this accepting which Scripture calls believing. The righteous God could not take any man to heaven unless He were first reconciled with him; since He now receives into heaven all who believe, righteousness and reconciliation must already be there and have happened. That Christ has acquired for us by His life, suffering, and death, and God has confirmed it by raising Him from the dead, for that was the resurrection of our Substitute (Burge). The fanatics regard faith not as a mere hand, but as a condition, which man fulfills and for the sake of which God receives man into heaven--whereas faith is really nothing but an empty hand, which I put forth in order that God might fill it. If therefore I had nothing more than faith, and not Christ (which of course is not possible), then I would go to hell together with my faith, because it is not the act of believing that makes me acceptable to God,

but it is Christ and His righteousness, which I grasp with the hand of faith. But that it is which all fanatics overlook. They want still to find some sort of place for the activity of man; so they locate this now in his faith, now in his repentance, now in his conversion, now in his sanctification. Of course, as was said before, no man can enter heaven if he is not converted and has a new heart, but he is saved not for the sake of conversion or this new heart, but he must first appear before God as a poor sinner, who has nothing at all that could please God, and who would be worthy of being put into the abyss of hell--but then let him appeal to the mercy of God and comfort himself with the fully accomplished redemption of Jesus Christ and grasp His entire merit, and thus he becomes righteous.

It must be stressed with total seriousness that God's wrath has been turned away from all men by Christ's doing and suffering, and that through the Gospel everyone is invited: Now receive grace! If a preacher had to step before an audience with the thought: on them the wrath of God still rests, and they must be prevailed upon to reconcile Him--it would be frightful. But because he knows that the redemption has already happened for all, God's wrath against all has been extinguished, therefore he can confidently say: "Let yourselves be reconciled with God," only accept His hand of grace. The Formula of Concord therefore also indicates that even Pharaoh was condemned not because he had been rejected by God according to an unconditional decision, but because he continued in his hardening of himself against God's gracious efforts. If no change had occurred in God's relation to men through Christ's suffering and death, then what meaning would the word reconciliation have? We would have to scratch it out of the Bible, if God, after the work of reconciliation has happened, still held the same wrath against the human race, as if it had not been accomplished. As surely as it stands in the Bible: "God was in Christ and reconciled the world with Himself and did not impute their sin to them," so surely there must be no more wrath in His heart, in so far as He thinks of the world in Christ. But that God looks at the world in this way is not empty fantasy, for Christ has indeed taken the cause of the world upon Himself, and therewith also its punishment and the wrath of God, has done everything which a Substitute must do, and has paid everything unto the uttermost farthing. How would it then be possible that God should after all that be able anew to look upon men with wrath and hatred? Thus one can think of the world as the totality of those for whom Christ has made satisfaction, and seen in this way, there is pure love, pure favour, pure grace upon it. But now God also looks about in the world, to see how people behave towards this redemption of Christ, and there He sees many who do not wish to be redeemed, they do not want to accept this reconciliation. They would, in most recent times, rather be descendants of apes, would rather belong to the cattle. Of course, against these there is in God's heart a wrath burning down to the very lowest hell. And there is no contradiction here. But it is contradictory to say that God is reconciled only through our faith. God is no longer the Enemy, Who is to be reconciled--but man is that. But as soon as he begins to believe, he accepts the hand of God, and that again he does through pure divine grace, for without that he would nevermore come to faith.

This two-sided sort of consideration we must practice in other regards too. We say, for instance, of Christ on the Cross: He hangs there as a sinner and at the same time as a righteous One. Now, is He a sinner or not?

For His Person not, for He has committed no sin, and in so far He is a righteous One. But for the world, whose Substitute He is, He is a sinner, yes, as Scripture says, "sin," so that He must be the greatest sinner of all, who has ever been on earth, because to Him are imputed the sins of all sinners. Thus Christ is, regarded according to His Person, the Righteous One, and according to His Mediator's office He is the sinner. So also it is with the believers. When one regards them according to their persons, they are sinners, "for we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment." But because through faith they are at the same time in Christ Jesus, so that the righteousness which Christ has acquired for them and given them, reigns and rules with them, they are received into the Kingdom of heaven as children of God. So also it is with the world, in a certain respect: In itself it lies in evil, under the curse and in condemnation; but as redeemed through Christ, because He has made satisfaction for it, God is reconciled with it. In so far it is true that no sin exists in the world any more. Christ after all has taken it away and carried it all the way into the Tomb; in so far also the whole world is free, rid, and relieved of death, devil, and damnation. And that must not be kept quiet but must be preached. The fear that people might become secure thereby dare not deter us. It may well be that someone thinks, when he hears such preaching: If all sin is already wiped out, then I am in no need, then I am saved even without faith--and thus he misuses the word of grace to his destruction. However, the question is not now about how this doctrine can be abused, but about what has happened for our salvation. Now we are to proclaim the whole counsel of God, therefore also we may not keep quiet about this doctrine from fear that it might be abused. It is just this fear which inhibits the fanatics, so that they do not proclaim the redemption of Christ without all restriction. They always think they might make people secure if they freely proclaim the grace of God to everyone.

The Formula of Concord speaks thus of this whole matter:

Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach and confess unanimously . . . that a poor sinner is justified before God (that is, he is absolved and declared utterly free from all his sins, and from the verdict of well deserved damnation, and is adopted as a child of God and an heir of eternal life) without any merit or worthiness on our part, and without any preceding, present, or subsequent works, by sheer grace, solely through the merit of the total obedience, the bitter passion, the death, and the resurrection of Christ, our Lord, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness. The Holy Spirit offers these treasures to us in the promise of the Gospel, and faith is the only means whereby we can apprehend, accept, apply them to ourselves, and make them our own. Faith is a gift of God whereby we rightly learn to know Christ as our redeemer in the Word of the Gospel and to trust him, that solely for the sake of his obedience we have forgiveness of sins by grace, are accounted righteous and holy by God the Father, and are saved forever. Thus the following statements of St. Paul are to be considered and taken as synonymous: "We are justified by faith" (Rom. 3:28), or "faith is reckoned to us as righteousness" (Rom. 4:5), or "when he says that we are justified by the obedience of Christ,

our only mediator, or that "one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men" (Rom. 5:18). For faith does not justify because it is so good a work and so God-pleasing a virtue, but because it lays hold on and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy Gospel. This merit has to be applied to us and to be made our own through faith if we are to be justified thereby. Therefore the righteousness which by grace is reckoned to faith or to the believers is the obedience, the passion, and the resurrection of Christ when he satisfied the law for us and paid for our sin. Since Christ is not only man, but God and man in one undivided person, he was as little under the law--since he is the Lord of the law--as he was obligated to suffer and die for his person. Therefore his obedience consists not only in his suffering and dying, but also in his spontaneous subjection to the law in our stead and his keeping of the law in so perfect a fashion that, reckoning it to us as righteousness, God forgives us our sins, accounts us holy and righteous, and saves us forever on account of this entire obedience which, by doing and suffering, in life and in death, Christ rendered for us to his heavenly Father. This righteousness is offered to us by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and in the sacraments, and is applied, appropriated, and accepted by faith, so that thus believers have reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, the grace of God, adoption, and the inheritance of eternal life (FC SD III, 9-16, Tappert, pp. 540-541).

Further:

Since as was mentioned above, it is the obedience of the entire person, therefore it is a perfect satisfaction and reconciliation of the human race, since it satisfied the eternal and immutable righteousness of God revealed in the law. This obedience is our righteousness which avails before God and is revealed in the Gospel, upon which faith depends before God and which God reckons to faith, as it is written, "For as by one man's disobedience many will be made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19), and "the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1:7), and again, "The righteous shall live by his faith" /Hab. 2:4/ (FC SD III, 57, Tappert, pp. 549-550).

Is not Christ's doctrine called Gospel, in German: a glad message? But why is it called that? Because when I preach the Gospel I preach nothing more than what has already been acquired for men and presented to them, and which they therefore accept, and of which they are to become heartily glad. The Gospel is the glad message that Christ has done the work which we ought to have done, yet could not do, and that the heavenly Father has, through the resurrection of our Reconciler given a sign from heaven, that He is fully satisfied through this. He who is now surprised that God now constantly has it said to the people: Be glad, for your guilt is wiped out and fully paid, why are you still fretting?--he who takes offence at this, takes offence at Christ and at His Gospel. And he who thinks that he is preaching too much comfort to the people thereby, and is making them secure, reveals thereby that he himself has not yet tasted of this Manna. He who has himself experienced

the comfort of the Gospel, will have to say: that's it, that I have come as the lost son, cut up and full of pains and sickness, that I said to my God: here I am, deal now with me according to Your grace. Then He received me, kissed me with the kiss of His mouth, and dressed me in the garments of salvation, gave me a ring for my hand, and called together neighbors and friends and prepared a feast of joy. He who does not want to preach the Gospel like this, may as well preach the Koran or the Talmud or the Pope's law, or whatever else he wants; but if he wants to make joyful Christians, then let him preach this glad message. Besides there are plenty of specific things which have to be preached. First the preparatory work must be done with the Law, and this must be preached in such a way that the hearers tremble and quake, so that they think: Hey, he is throwing us all into hell! There is no counsel, no rescue, we are lost! But then from the Gospel one shows the very opposite. He who preaches thus places the people on a firm foundation, so that they do not want to go back into the Law.

The fanatics have such ideas about the redemption: Through this, that Christ became Man, lived, and suffered, he made it possible for men now themselves to perform, do and live whatever and however (it) is necessary for their salvation. Even if they then talk much about faith, this still sticks in them, and even faith itself becomes with them a meritorious human work. This too is the very doctrine of the Pope, for even when the Romans also say that Christ died for the sins of the world, they nevertheless do not believe that through Christ's death guilt and punishment are abolished, but teach that man must provide salvation for himself through his repenting, penance, and other good works, although to be sure only Christ makes this meritorious and God helps along. Thus the fanatics mix the work of man into this matter of justification: Therefore they hate the doctrine of the substitutionary active obedience of Christ (as the Methodists have for years been writing publicly against this) and of His completed redemption, and imagine that if only they are rid of their past sins through Christ, then they could become so holy, also in their own lives, that the dear God should marvel at it. We on the other hand confess ourselves to be lost and condemned sinners, and say that God must do everything for our salvation and give us a righteousness at which all the holy angels, yes God's Son Himself also, marvel. Yes, this is not saying too much. He did that very thing, for in John 3:16 He Himself says: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son," as if to say: no, who would have thought such a thing, so, so much, so ardently God loved the world, that He gave His Son to such a heap of shameful sinners, and in the sense in which He says: There you have Him, now do with Him as you wish; He throws His Son into the fray and yields Him up so completely that they can shame and dishonor Him, spear Him, and yes, even slaughter Him, and that God does that the world would be redeemed. At this God's Son marvels with the words: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." Therefore also the Apostle says in Rom. 8:3,4: "What was impossible for the Law (since it was weakened through the flesh), that God did, and sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and condemned sin in the flesh, through sin. In order that the righteousness, demanded by the Law, might be fulfilled IN US, who now walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Because He has become our Brother, flesh of our flesh, righteousness is fulfilled in us; not indeed in every individual person, but in our humanity. Therefore it is so important that Christ did not bring along a humanity from heaven, but assumed it from the Virgin Mary, for now our humanity is truly justified in Him. That we now are to preach,

and he who grasps this is helped, and he is a blessed man. Miserable on the other hand is he to whom this does not appeal, for God shouts it out into the world: "All things are ready," now quickly come and accept grace, salvation, and life, but alas, proud man does not want to know anything of this most precious gift of God, which He offers and presents (darreicht) in the Gospel, yes, properly understood, even imparts to the whole world. It is better, however, not to use the word "impart" (mittheilen) of the universal justification of the world, because in our German language it almost always signifies not only a presenting (Darreichen) from God's side, but also an accepting from man's side.

Thesis 5: "As through the substitutionary death of Christ the whole world's debt of sin was wiped out and the punishment for it was endured, so also righteousness, life and salvation have been brought again for the whole world through Christ's resurrection, and have come upon (ueber) all men in Christ as the Substitute of all mankind."

This thesis is added to the preceding to show how the resurrection of Christ is the ground and cornerstone of justification. In His death Christ shed His blood as the ransom for the sins of the world; through the resurrection of the Son God the Father bears witness that He has accepted the propitiatory sacrifice of His Son as payment in full (vollgiltig--fully valid). Very often Scripture puts the death and resurrection of Christ together, and the holy Apostles call themselves, to designate the nature of their office, actually witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, in order to underscore thereby at the same time the great importance of the same. So for example the Apostle Paul writes in Rom. 4:25: "Christ was offered for our sins and raised again for our righteousness" (um unserer Gerechtigkeit willen--for the sake of our righteousness). Now if Christ was raised again for the sake of our (as it says according to the original text) justification, then precisely the resurrection must be the ground on which it rests, without which it would be impossible. But this justification is a universal one, acquired for all men, for it says in Rom. 5:18: "As through the sin of one, condemnation has come upon (ueber) all men, so also through the righteousness of One, justification of Life has come upon all men." Burdened with the sin which had come through one upon all, Christ went into death; of this sin of all He is absolved by the Resurrection, and that which God the Father has hereby done to Christ, happened not for the Son's benefit, but for that of the whole human race. Therefore it is not enough, according to Rom. 8:33,34, that Christ died, but "much more" the resurrection is the last and highest ground of justification, for through it the Father sealed the fact that He had accepted the sacrifice of His Son for mankind's debt of sin. Therefore also the Apostle writes in I Cor. 15:17: "If Christ is not risen, then your faith is vain, then you are still in your sins, then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost." Thus the whole work of redemption would be declared invalid by God, had He not raised Christ.

Many, even among the pastors, do not quite know what to do with the resurrection of Christ. They read in one place that Christ raised Himself, and then again that the Father raised Him, and this they do not quite know how to rhyme. So they think that on the one hand Christ rose in order to prove His Divinity, and on the other hand that He was raised in order that the possibility and certainty of our resurrection might be proved thereby. But however true both of these things are, neither is the main point. Only

to prove His Divinity Christ would not have died and then risen again, and the possibility of our resurrection was proved by Christ already by His raising of others; the main point remains that God declared through Christ's resurrection: Christ has now paid for the sins of the whole world, therefore it is now free of its debt (or guilt); now the whole world may shout Victory! for her freedom from sin and her righteousness have been won. This does not contradict the fact that man becomes righteous by faith, for when faith is mentioned, then thereby are emphasized the personal appropriation (Aneignung) from man's side and the imputation of the acquired righteousness from God's side. But that would not be possible if the world were not first justified through Christ's death and resurrection, if the acquittal in the resurrection had not followed the conviction in death.

Dr. Luther says the following to the words, Gal. 1:2: "And God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead": "The way it looks, St. Paul might well have omitted these words, but as I said before, of what his heart is full, his mouth runs over. His heart, mind, and courage are kindled, so that he would like to pour out the incomprehensible treasure of the grace of Christ already in the title (Unterschrift, signature), and preach of the righteousness of God, which is called the resurrection of the dead. For Christ, Who lives and is risen from the dead, He Himself speaks through him and drives him thus; therefore he adds not without reason that he is indeed also an Apostle through God the Father, Who has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Just as if he wanted to say: It is a matter here of acting against Satan and the poisonous generation of vipers, Satan's tool, as those who want to overturn the righteousness of my Lord Christ, raised by God the Father from the dead, through whose righteousness alone we too are to be made holy before God, and raised from the dead to eternal life. But because they dare to overturn this righteousness of Christ, they are resisting both the Father and the Son and that which is the work of Both. Thus he lets the whole matter and the main point of this epistle fly out all at once the moment he opens his mouth. But the main point is the resurrection of Christ, Who rose again for the sake of our righteousness, Rom. 4:25, and thereby has overcome the Law, sin, death, and all misfortune. Wherefore His overcoming (Ueberwindung) is an overcoming of the Law, of sins, of our flesh, of the world, of the devil, of death, of hell, and of all sorts of evil and misfortune. And this His victory and glorious, happy overcoming He has given to us for our own. Therefore, praise God, we are not in need. For though the tyrants and enemies may well accuse and frighten us, they nevertheless cannot cast us into despair or damnation, since Christ, Who has risen from the dead and defeated them all, is our righteousness. Therefore we say praise and thanks to God in eternity, Who has given us this happy victory and overcoming through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

In reply to an inquiry of the members of the honorable "Norwegian Synod," what stand the Synodical Conference takes with reference to the reproaches which the Iowa Synod makes to the effect that the Norwegians had espoused general justification, it was stated: This doctrine is actually (geradezu) expressed in the passage Rom. 5:18, and therefore it is not only a biblical doctrine but also a biblical expression that justification of life is come upon all men. Only a Calvinistic exegesis could explain this passage to the effect that only the elect are justified. Also orthodox older theologians of our church therefore speak of the general justification, acquired for and offered to all. Gerhard says that Christ's resurrection is the general

absolution; but absolution is nothing other than justification.* In Christ after all the sinful world was condemned to death, and in His resurrection just this world was declared righteous. When the pastor now absolves, he distributes a treasure which already exists, namely the forgiveness of sins already acquired. If the treasure did not exist, then also no pastor could absolve, yes, we could then not speak at all of the justification of the sinner through faith, since faith means taking what is there. If now the world were not already justified, believing would have to mean performing a work towards justification. But the whole preaching of the Gospel is a message of God about a righteousness which has already been acquired before Him and is there for all. Therefore the expression that in Christ the justification of the whole world has already happened not only contains nothing dangerous, but is also quite biblical.

Those who say that God has made the whole world righteous, but has not declared it righteous, actually deny thereby again the whole of justification, for the declaring righteous by the Father is not to be severed from the making righteous of the Son, when He raised Christ from the dead. Of course none of this helps anyone as yet towards the possession of righteousness and salvation, if he does not also accept justification. When a king pardons a group of criminals, then they all are from the king's side acquitted of guilt and punishment, but whoever among them does not accept the pardon, must continue to suffer for his guilt; it is the same with sinners in the justification which has happened through Christ's death and resurrection. Yes, if God had not written and sealed the letter of pardon, then we pastors would be liars and seducers of the people if we said to them: Only believe, then you are righteous. But now that God has through the raising of His Son signed the letter of pardon for the sinners, and sealed it with His divine seal, we can confidently preach: the world is justified, the world is reconciled with God, which latter expression too would be impermissible if the former were not true. Our old dogmaticians too would themselves have used the expression more--since they believed and taught the substance--had not Huber shortly before Gerhard's time taught that God had not only justified all men already, but had also elected them to eternal life. In order to avoid the appearance of agreement with this erroneous doctrine, they used the expression only rarely. Already in the year 1593 the Wuerttemberg theologians (Heerbrand, Gerlach, Hafenreffer, Osiander, Bidembach, and others) conceded to Huber with reference to the doctrine of justification that he seemed to deviate from them in it "in phrasi tamen magis ac loquendi modo, quam reipsa," that is, "more however in the expression and in the manner of speaking than in the substance itself" (Loescher's Unschuldige Nachrichten, 1730, p. 567). The Wittenberg theologians (Gesner, Leyser, Hunnius, and others) did not want to tolerate Huber's expression: "Christus contulit proprie redemptionem toti generi humano," that is, "Christ imparted the redemption to the entire human race in the proper sense," because the actual imparting, "as it is taken in the theological schools," refers to the appropriation (See Wittenberg Consilia I, 642ff.).

* The Formula of Concord says: "We believe, teach, and confess, that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word 'justify' in this article means 'absolve'" (Art. III--cf. Tappert, p. 473).

Nevertheless we find not a few unimpeachable theologians who speak of a universal justification or absolution. Joh. Quistorp (died in 1648 as professor in Rostock) writes in his comments to 2 Cor. 5:19: "The word justification and reconciliation is used in a twofold manner: 1) in respect of the acquired merit, 2) in respect of the appropriated merit. Thus all are justified and some are justified. All, in respect of the acquired merit; some, in respect of the appropriated merit."

John Gerhard, after Luther and Chemnitz no doubt the greatest theologian of our church (died in 1637 as professor in Jena), says in his commentary on Rom. 4:25: "As God punished our sins in Christ, because they were laid on Him and imputed to Him as our Substitute, so in the same manner He, by raising Him from the dead, absolved Him by this very act of our sins which had been imputed to Him, and thereby He absolved in Him also us."

Gottfried Olearius (died in 1715 as professor in Leipzig) says in his treatise about the resurrection of Christ that Christ has paid what He had obligated Himself to pay, and that His payment was sufficient His resurrection has proved, in that it shows that our Substitute has been acquitted, because the obligation undertaken by Him has been discharged by His satisfaction, and thus we together with Him are justified in the judgment of God. Therefore is written the word of faith: "Who will condemn? Christ is here, Who has died, yes much rather, Who also is raised again."

John Jacob Rambach writes to Rom. 4:25: "Christ was in His resurrection first of all justified for His own Person, Is. 50:5, I Tim. 3:16, since the righteousness of God declared that it had been paid and satisfied in full by this our Substitute, and issued Him as it were a receipt thereof, and that happened in His resurrection, when He was released from His Debtor's prison and set free. But since the Substitute was now justified, then in Him also all debtors were co-justified" (Ausfuehrliche Erklaerung der Epistel an die Roemer, p. 322). The same to Rom. 5:19: "The justification of the human race indeed also occurred, in respect of the acquisition, in one moment, in the moment in which Christ rose and was thus declared righteous; but in respect of the appropriation it still continues till the last day" (Ibid., p. 386).

Adam Struensee writes: "What Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:15 of the death of Christ: 'we hold that since One has died for all, we all have died,' may also be referred to the resurrection of Christ: If One has risen for all, then they all have risen and been justified; because God was in Christ and reconciled the world with Himself and did not impute their trespasses to them, for He imputed them to Christ" (Zeugnisse der Wahrheit zur Gottseligkeit. VIII. Forts. Halle 1741, pp. 30ff.).

Ph. D. Burk: "To be sure, it is not to be denied that Scripture in several places speaks of justification as of a universal benefit of grace of God upon all men; e.g. Rom. 5:18: 'through the righteousness of One, justification of life has come upon all men.' Again 2 Cor. 5:19: 'God reconciled the world with Himself and did not impute their sin to them.' And a witness of the truth must always handle the Gospel in such a way that he lets the general offer of God's grace to all men be his main work. And every soul which is to come to faith must lay the foundation in the recognition of this universal justification upon all men" (Die Rechtfertigung. Stuttgart, 1763, p. 63ff.). The Iowans know

perfectly well that the people whom they seek to defend against the Norwegian Synod take a wrong stand in the doctrine of justification, of absolution, of the means of grace. Since they nevertheless defend those who teach thus in the Augustana Synod, they indicate sufficiently thereby what spirit's children they are, and how much the pure doctrine means to them. That they care more about the fighting than about the thing itself one can gather from the fact that they have said not a word against a publication by Dr. Weber, who had taught the same thing in clear words. But Dr. Weber is after all one of theirs, and Pastor Loehe's successor. Now that the Norwegians say the same thing, the Iowans heatedly fall upon them as upon frightful heretics. And what is it ultimately that they are able to attack? That Christ has borne the sins of the whole world and that God the Father raised Christ from the dead, they cannot deny; therefore they must seize upon some expressions which are perhaps a bit awkward (*unbequem*). Thereby the appearance is created that the whole zeal is applied only in order to distract the church's attention from their own aberrations and to occupy the people meanwhile with the supposed aberrations of other bodies.

It is, for example, decidedly Pelagian when they maintain that the final decision in conversion is man's business. And also in this matter, although they want to give themselves the appearance of orthodoxy, they do not quite succeed. For when G. Fritschel claims: "In the Gospel God shows the sinner a way out, which can redeem him from death and damnation and bring about the forgiveness of his sins," he thereby denies that justification has already been accomplished by Christ and that thus the righteousness which avails before God already exists. But thus teach not only the Scriptures but also the Confessions of our church, as in the 6th article of the Augsburg Confession, where it says, following the Latin: "forgiveness of sins and justification are apprehended by faith" (Tappert, p. 32), and, "grace, forgiveness of sins, and justification are apprehended by faith" (Tappert, p. 44). Thus also the Apology: "Faith accepts the forgiveness of sins" (Tappert, p. 115). Further: "Justification is something promised freely for Christ's sake alone, wherefore it is accepted always and only by faith before God" (cf. Tappert, p. 137).

These quotations show clearly that a justification must first be in existence, which faith can accept, that faith does not have to bring it about first, but that it embraces it as already existing. But if someone were to say: Yes, forgiveness of sins indeed already exists, but not justification, he would have to be ignorant of our Confessions, which expressly teach that justification and forgiveness of sins are the same. "We believe, teach, and confess that according to the usage of Holy Scripture the word justify in this article means absolve, that is, acquit of sins" (cf. Tappert, p. 473).

Let no one think that we are dealing in this matter with a fight about words. No, the most highly important matter is to be maintained here against attacks and error. Particularly in this land of sects and fanaticism we must earnestly carry on the doctrine of the universal justification; for they probably still teach that man becomes righteous through faith, but then they speak of faith in a way that one soon notices that they make of faith again an efficient cause of justification, whereby they rob the Lord Christ of His honor. For what else does he do who says that faith justifies for the reason that it gives strength for good works, for prayer, and wrestling, than that he pushes Christ's merit aside?

Also the testimony of a Scandinavian, the Swede Andreas Rohrberg (died in 1767 as royal Swedish court preacher in Stockholm), may find a place here. He writes: "Had God not raised our Mediator, He would thereby have let it be known that He was not yet satisfied with us. But now that Jesus is risen, God has thereby declared that He has been satisfied, wherefore also Jesus was in His resurrection justified as Mediator in place of the sinners. And in so far as the whole human race, when it is considered in general and as one person, was justified at the same time together with Him, it too was received, as a fruit of this justification, into God's covenant of peace, and thus the peace which had been lost in Adam was restored again between God and men" (Ordnung der Seligmachung des gefallenen Menschen, p. 103).

The same: "It remains in this contemplation to make an application to ourselves, whereby the question at once arises whether all men were justified with Christ, since He was justified in their place. To deny this outright and a priori would be the same as to rob us men of a great consolation, and it would at the same time militate against God's Word, which expressly teaches thus. But if one were on the other hand to affirm this question in such a way that the conclusion should be drawn that now man needs no further justification, after he has been justified once in and with Christ, then this likewise militates against God's Word, and lays the foundation for a carnal security. Thus there is caution required here, to hold the proper middle way, so that the truth may not suffer loss on either side. The Apostle Paul gives us light in this matter, when he sets up a comparison between Adam and Christ, the two Heads of the human race. As regards Adam, he stood, in his testing, not only for himself; but in his one person he represented the entire human race, whose cause lay upon him, either to preserve it or to ruin it, so that what he did and what came upon him as a result, were later to be imputed to the whole (human) race and to come upon it, Rom. 5:18,19. Now, that which this first Adam had ruined, our Saviour, Christ, Who is called the second Adam and the other Man (I Cor. 15:45-47), took over, in order to restore it again, and the Apostle shows that the same applies to Him, only the other way round. Thus Jesus also represented in His one Person our entire race, which was regarded under Him as one Body, one Person, one Crowd, whose Head He was. And since the whole debt of sin of the world was laid on Jesus, this debt could no longer remain lying on the world, for it could not be in two places at the same time. Thus the world was seen through Christ's sufferings and death as free and released of all debt. When Jesus, on Whom the whole mass of sins lay, had fought His way through so that God according to His strictest justice found it just to take the debt away from Him and to justify Him, then it was clear that the debt (Schuld--guilt) with all its condemnation was taken away not only from Jesus, but also from the world; for the debt could then not fall back again upon the world, in so far as its authorized Representative, on Whom all its debt lay, had wiped it out. Thus we see that in the same hour as Jesus was justified there occurred also, together with Him, a justification upon the world. Rom. 5:18" (p. 116). When Holy Scripture says: If Christ were not risen, ye were still in your sins; when the article of the resurrection of Christ is called by the Fathers the most Christian article; when the church in her Easter hymns expresses sheer jubilation over it, then certainly the Holy Spirit, the holy apostles who wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Church, and the Fathers must have had good reasons for using such language and for attributing such great significance to the resurrection of Christ. Now Scripture says: He was

sacrificed for the sake of our sin, etc. What does this mean? Christ was sacrificed for the sake of our sin, the Lord dies on the cross burdened not with His own sin but with the guilt of the world, whose Substitute He was. When He died, the debt was paid; then the whole world could shout: For me, for me satisfaction has been rendered according to the law of substitution. But Christ did not remain in death, He rose, raised by the Father. What has been attested thereby? One can rightly say that the resurrection of Christ guarantees His true divinity; it teaches that there will truly follow a universal resurrection of the dead; but it means still more. The Apostle says: Christ was raised for the sake of our righteousness. Through the glory of the Father Christ was declared righteous. The Substitute was released, because He had paid all debts for which He had undertaken the role of Substitute. But since His payment was made for men, they too are thereby free and released. As Christ died as Saviour, so also He was raised from the dead as Saviour.

Thesis 6: "This grace, forgiveness, righteousness, life, and salvation, acquired again for all men by Christ's work of redemption, God brings to men in the means of grace. For the evangelical promise, which is contained in the Word of the Gospel and in the holy Sacraments, is not an empty sound or a contentless promise, but a powerful communication (Darreichung) and giving of all the goods which God promises in this Word of His grace."

In this paragraph there is summed up the doctrine of the means of grace, as it comes into consideration in this connection, namely that the whole treasure, as it has been acquired by Christ's doing and suffering and sealed by His resurrection, is deposited in the means of grace and conveyed there, in order that men might be able to grasp the treasure in these means of grace and become partakers of it. It must be emphasized especially that the promise of God is not an empty sound, but a communication of the benefits, so that God really also conveys in the means of grace that which He has promised in the Gospel; and the same is true of the Sacraments. Thereby we differ from all who do not believe that there are means of grace, through which God really offers, communicates, and gives us that which Christ has acquired for us by His suffering and death.

When someone, in fear over his sins, asks the fanatics (Schwaermer): What shall I do to be saved, that I may receive grace and certainty of God's grace, that my sins are forgiven? The fanatics reply: Pray, pray; fall on your knees and wrestle with God until He gives it to you into the heart. And when they then feel as if God had given it to them in their hearts, then they jump up and cry: Glory, now I have grace! Now far be it from us to deny that the Spirit of grace also makes Himself noticeable in the sinner's heart, if man does not stubbornly shut himself to His workings; but it is a dreadful confusion if one considers this feeling, which stirs in the fanatics through their praying and wrestling, to be that grace itself. At best what the fanatics call grace is an effect of the grace of the Holy Spirit (for quite often this feeling is brought about by quite different causes, not through the Holy Spirit). Grace after all is something outside of us, not in us, just as righteousness is something outside of us.

Therefore when a poor sinner comes to a Lutheran pastor and says: Where then am I to find grace? I have recognized now that I am a poor lost and

condemned sinner, that I therefore cannot endure before the just God! Then the Lutheran pastor answers: Comfort yourself with the grace of God. But this grace is in the Gospel and in the holy Sacraments. Believe that which God has told you there, and comfort yourself with the grace which is thereby given you. Comfort yourself with your Baptism and that grace was already given to you in it. Use the Absolution, go to the Holy Supper, for there it is that God offers, communicates, gives, and seals to you grace and forgiveness of all your sins. But it is just this which the fanatics deny. They know indeed of a grace, but they do not know where this grace is to be found; so they want to pray it down on their knees. It would of course be dreadful to say anything against prayer; for we know that God has commanded it, and promised that He would hear us; but it is just as dreadful to imagine that prayer is a means of grace. After all, only he can pray aright who already has grace. To invoke God for grace I can and ought to do in prayer indeed, but to communicate, give, convey grace, this prayer cannot do. But herein all sects err. They all say of the Word of God that it has a witnessing and perhaps also an effective power, but the communicating (mittheilende--imparting) power they deny to it. But one must distinguish between the vis et virtus operativa et collativa, the effective and the imparting power.

Joh. Benedict Carpzov writes: "The Augsburg Confession here in the 5th Article treats of the Word and the Sacraments in so far as they are efficacious means and active in the manner of physical effect (physischer Wirkung), since at this point the question is: Whence is faith? and whether Word and Sacraments effect it? For beyond this manner of working there applies to the Word and the Sacraments still another, which is of a moral sort, and consists in the giving, imparting or offering, communicating and sealing of the justifying benefit. For one may not confuse that which Word and Sacraments do in so far as they produce, nourish, or awaken faith, with that which the Word does in so far as it first of all contributes to justification. For while in the first case Word and Sacrament act as tools which not only effect the supernatural powers towards believing, but also excite the spiritual movements of faith, in the second case, that is in justification, they are tools which only give, communicate, and seal the justifying benefit, which is Christ's obedience. In short, Word and Sacrament are considered in a twofold manner: 1) as effective and kindling (effectiva et excitativa) tools, in so far as they effect (bewirken--produce) faith; 2) as giving, imparting, and sealing (dativa, collativa, et obsignativa) tools, so far as they first of all contribute to justification" (Isagog. in libros symbol. Lips. 1675, p. 251).

The sects imagine that the Word does not have this giving and imparting power. Therefore they do not believe that the means of grace are the hand of God, through which everything which we need for the salvation of our souls is transmitted to us. But whoever does not believe this, does not believe that there is such a thing as means of grace at all. He who wants to speak of means of grace, must first believe that grace has already been acquired, which grace one obtains through such means, through which God distributes it as with His hand: for if there are means which convey grace, then this can be the case only because grace is already there. But after we have considered and adopted the fifth thesis, it is to be presupposed that we are all convinced of this: righteousness is already acquired, grace is already there, and now we may confidently go on and say: Word and Sacrament are the hand of God,

through which there is imparted to us what Christ has acquired and brought from the grave for us. When we speak therefore of the power and effectiveness of the means of grace, the meaning is this: that Word and Sacrament are not only an announcement and proclamation, nor only a power which produces faith, but a giving, imparting, and sealing of the goods themselves which they announce and proclaim. In Rom. 1:16 the Gospel is called a power of God which saves. Hence not only a testimony to salvation, not only a direction about how to obtain righteousness, but an imparting of the same is here ascribed to the Gospel.

One must strictly distinguish then between the effecting and the imparting power; for the Word of God is a Word of the Spirit, which produces divine and heavenly effects in us, works in us repentance, faith, and sanctification, but it does not bring us only the message that all the benefits of grace are there and intended for us, but it brings us also the goods themselves. It is not the sort of message which a prisoner might hear through his prison-bars from some casual visitor, but the sort which an ambassador authorized by the king brings with his sealed document of pardon. Now after Christ's death and resurrection every believing Christian is such an authorized person, after God has sent the message of pardon out into all the world. If people don't believe him, he takes the Bible and says: Here it is written, only take it out: God so loved the world, or: God was in Christ, etc. This is nothing other than when the authorized official steps before the condemned criminal and says: Do not worry, you shall not be killed; I hereby declare to you in the name of His Majesty the King: you are pardoned. And when the preacher points to the Word of God and the Sacraments, then he acts as would the authorized official if the criminal would not believe him: he then points to the sealed letter of pardon and says: there it is, read it for yourself. So also the preacher says to the anxious and fearful person: Here, read God's letter of pardon, sealed with the blood of Christ and attested by the Holy Spirit, and believe it, then it will be confirmed in your heart by the self-same Spirit.

So then one ought to distinguish between the power of the means of grace according to which they can work faith and everything which must happen in a man in order that he remain a child of God, and the power and effect by which they also really impart and transmit that which the words say and express. The former power most of those who still want to be Christians still concede. Zwingli of course did not concede it; he said that God needs no carriage, and that anything to do with the senses has no power in the spiritual realm. Far from it, however, that all who are in the Reformed Church, should believe this. On the contrary, the situation is rather that all simple people among the sects believe Christ's words, Who says: My words are Spirit and are Life; and do not explain them thus: My words bring the message about the Spirit and Life. But they all deny this, that the Word has the power to impart that of which it speaks. They imagine that thereby the doctrine of conversion is overthrown. Now of course everyone must be converted if he wants to go to heaven, but it is not through conversion that he gets to heaven and comes into possession of the benefits of grace, but through this that God gives them to him. Of course he does not get them if he does not take them, but his taking does not create the benefits, but God's grace and the redemption of Jesus Christ. These are therefore present and valid even without his taking, but he has not yet stretched out his hand and taken them, yes, he has struck God upon His hand of

grace, Who stretched out His hand and presented them to him, and has cast the benefits from him and trampled them underfoot. Nevertheless God had held out and presented the benefits to him in true earnestness and verily, else how could he have trodden them underfoot? But what God presents, He gives forever. Whoever therefore, e.g. is baptized, has through this means of grace forever received forgiveness of sins, redemption from death and devil, and eternal life. To be sure it happens regrettably that someone goes along for many years and lives in sin and shame, therefore tramples God's lofty benefits underfoot all this time; nevertheless they are and remain given to him. Therefore he may at any moment return to his Baptism and grasp and use the long despised and scorned benefits, without committing a theft. Even Lutheran preachers here often confuse being permitted to believe (glauben duerfen) and being able to believe (glauben koennen). We maintain according to God's Word that there exists no human being who is not permitted to believe, but at the same time we admit that there are only too many who are not able to believe. Therefore the Law must be preached in all its sharpness in order that the people might first learn to recognize and feel the misery of their sin, and then the Gospel in all its sweetness, in order that God might graciously move them through it, so that they might also be able to believe; for being permitted to believe is self-evident.

But the fanatics tell a man whose heart the Law has hit: you are now indeed frightened over your sins, and God's grace must help you, but now take care and don't reach out too quickly. First go into the closet, pray and wrestle with God, till you have worked yourself through to the feeling of grace; then you may believe that you have it. This is a godless way to deal with souls. In this way one can lead them to despair but not to a true certainty of their salvation. Therefore one must speak thus to the sinner: Do you confess then that you are a sinner, and are you heartily frightened of this, that you lie under God's wrath? If that is how it is with you, then believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. Thus the Apostle said to the gaoler: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you and your house will be saved. And consider: he says that to one who had just been on the point of murdering himself by his own hand, but who was now in fear over his sins and asked: "What must I do to be saved?" What would a Methodist have answered him? He would likely have said: Yes, not so fast. Try once, pray and wrestle; but it can take a long time before grace comes to a breakthrough in you, and till you experience that the dear God has accepted you. But Paul simply was no Methodist; we see that from his behavior towards the criminal, the gaoler. And why could he speak with him in this way? Because he knew that the Word was the means of grace, with which He simultaneously conveys life and salvation. From him we Lutherans ought to learn. The Apology teaches this, when it says:

In speaking of justifying faith, therefore, we must remember that these three elements always belong together: the promise itself, the fact that the promise is free, and the merits of Christ as the price and propitiation. The promise is accepted by faith; the fact that it is free excludes our merits and shows that the blessing is offered only by mercy; the merits of Christ are the price because there must be a certain propitiation for our sins. Scripture contains many pleas for mercy, and the holy Fathers often say that we are saved by mercy. And so at every mention of mercy we must

remember that this requires faith, which accepts the promise of mercy. Similarly, at every mention of faith we are also thinking of its object, the promised mercy. For faith does not justify or save because it is a good work in itself, but only because it accepts the promised mercy (Apol. IV, 53-56, Tappert, p. 114).

This citation is important at this point because it shows that the Book of Concord understands by the means of grace something altogether different from the notion of the fanatics. They always imagine that it is with the divine promises as with the word of man, where the thing indicated does not yet lie in the word; yet with God the matter is wrapped in the Word. Therefore the Symbolical Books make use of the language of the Bible, which often names the abstract and means the concrete; so Paul, who by the promise always understands the thing promised. Thus the Sacraments are in the Smalcald Articles called "means which are to impart the promise to those who desire it." Here belongs also what is said in the Large Catechism:

"Further we believe that in this Christian church we have the forgiveness of sins, which is granted through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire Gospel. . . .

But outside the Christian church (that is, where the Gospel is not) there is no forgiveness, and hence no holiness. Therefore all who seek to merit holiness through their works rather than through the Gospel and the forgiveness of sin have expelled and separated themselves from the church.

Meanwhile, since holiness has begun and is growing daily, we await the time when our flesh will be put to death, will be buried with all its uncleanness, and will come forth gloriously and arise to complete and perfect holiness in a new, eternal life. Now we are only halfway pure and holy. The Holy Spirit must continue to work in us through the Word, daily granting forgiveness until we attain to that life where there will be no more forgiveness. In that life are only perfectly pure and holy people full of goodness and righteousness, completely freed from sin, death, and all evil, living in new, immortal and glorified bodies" (Tappert, pp. 417-418).
Further:

"That this merit and these benefits of Christ are to be offered, given and distributed to us through his Word and sacraments" (FC SD XI, 15, Tappert, p. 619).

Here we hear how our Confessions testify that through the Sacraments the benefits of Christ are also given and distributed. The old theologians, when they speak of those who do not yet believe, mostly use the word offere, meaning present and offer. An imparting (conferre) is mentioned only in the sense that it includes the appropriation from man's side. But from God's side the Sacraments impart the benefits as certainly as God does not lie. When God therefore says to a man: Your sins are forgiven you, then He has

thereby also certainly given what the words say and express. If we speak here of imparting, we are not speaking at all of what happens in certain circumstances, but that the means of grace are in principle not to be denied an imparting power. Of course, to him who does not believe, nothing is imparted through them, if one wants to speak of the meaning of this word in the strict sense. But we speak of what the means of grace have in and of themselves, and there we say: this power consists not only in this that they indicate what God has done for us, nor only in this that God through them knocks at the heart of the sinner, but they also have the miraculous power that they give what the Word contains. When God says: you are my child, then also I have through that Word become His child, as the Saviour says: you are clean for the sake of the word which I have spoken to you. As in the creation the Word had the power to call all things out of nothing into existence, so also in the justification of the sinner, only that here man has the terrible power to resist the Word.

But if one asks now: How can the Word of God work something without at the same time imparting grace? the answer is: these are two different things, to present (darreichen) and to impart (mittheilen). When the Word presents the forgiveness of sins, that is one part, but when it works faith in the heart, so that the sinner now also grasps the proffered grace, that is the other part. The better sort among the Reformed admit the former, the others deny both. Some of them do not deny that the Word kindles faith, but now according to them faith goes walking about to see where it might find God. But God's Word teaches and a Lutheran believes this, that already in the Word there are forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, and faith also grasps this. When the Reformed also admit at times that the Word of God has also an effective, a converting power, they all nevertheless mean that one must obtain forgiveness of sins from heaven. Against that we say that the Word not only changes us, and makes us fit for the benefits, but that it also brings and gives them to us, so that a man need not say, when he hears the heavenly gifts named and described in the Word: Yes, but how do I get them? But that he can say: There in the Word they are, and in Baptism they are handed over to me. If he says: but I have fallen after Baptism, then one answers him: you of course have fallen, but Baptism has not fallen; that still stands together with all the benefits which God has put into it; only reach out again and take the benefits, which were given to you already then, when you were baptized.

But this the sects do not believe. They imagine that it is conversion which gains grace again for man, so that his heart is changed, and that it is this change for the sake of which one may believe again that one has forgiveness of sins. But this is to hitch the horses behind the wagon. For if I build my state of grace on my new heart, then I build the cause on the effect. From this it emerges that they have a totally different conception of faith from the biblical one. They imagine that faith is a new emotion of the heart, which however as yet has nothing, but only seeks something.

How completely differently our Catechism speaks of the effect of the means of grace. To the question, e.g., What does Baptism give or profit? it replies: "It works forgiveness of sins, releases from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the Words and promise of God declare." And to the question: "How can water do such great things?" it answers: "It is not the water indeed that does them, but the Word of God,

which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such Word of God in the water." Likewise to the question: "How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?" -- "It is not the eating and drinking indeed that does them, but the words here written. . . .and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins."

As soon as the Word sounds forth then, I already have everything it indicates; while those who attribute to it only the effective power (vis effectiva), regard it as a little seed out of which all that must grow. Actually both lie in the Word, the gifts of grace as well as the power to accept such gifts. The necessary change, which must happen to every man if he is to be saved, God works, and He works it through the means of grace, through which man's heart is changed. This is called the order of grace, since God calls a man through the Gospel, enlightens him with His gifts, and sanctifies and keeps him in the true faith. But besides this man must also receive something which cannot be worked in him: grace, forgiveness of sins, justification. This latter occurs in God and is His, hence it cannot be worked in man, but it must be given to him. This then is the imparting power of the means of grace (vis collativa). The Symbolical Books therefore also describe the means of grace now as the means which produce faith in the heart of man, and now as vessels in which God proffers His heavenly benefits. For when God comes to man, He finds him 1) beggarly poor and 2) dead. Therefore God must now through His means of grace do both for him: He must 1) raise him from the dead, and 2) present him with the benefits of His House. Thus God is our Physician and our generous Giver, and His Word is partly medicine, partly bearer of the heavenly treasure. If we had the power to believe in ourselves, then it would of course be enough if the Word would simply announce the treasures to us; but we do not even have the power to will, to seek, to grasp; therefore this twofold power of the means of grace is necessary for our salvation, that it raise us to new life, and that it give us that which we do not have.

Thesis 7: "The Gospel therefore is not a mere historical narrative of the accomplished work of the redemption, but much rather a powerful declaration of peace and a promise of grace on the part of God towards the world redeemed by Christ, and thus at all times a powerful means of grace, in which God for His part brings, proffers, distributes, gives and presents the forgiveness of sins and the righteousness acquired by Christ, even though not all to whom God issues His serious call of grace accept this invitation of the reconciled God, and thus also do not become partakers of the accompanying benefits."

A main question in this whole topic is: What is the Gospel? By way of reply it is to be maintained: it is the pardon of God to the world. Because He has been reconciled through Christ, He now wants this also to be preached, so that the whole world might be moved to let itself be reconciled with Him too. The Formula of Concord says: "We must by all means cling rigidly and firmly to the fact that as the proclamation of repentance extends over all men (Luke 24:47), so also does the Gospel. Therefore Christ has commanded to preach 'repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name among all nations'" (Tappert, p. 620). So also the Gospel is simply called absolving in the Symbolical Books: "The word of Absolution proclaims peace to us and is the Gospel itself."

The Reformed imagine that the Gospel is a narration, an historical report of that which God has done; but that God in this Word also proffers grace, that they deny. But our church teaches that he who hears the Gospel and believes becomes righteous. When the Gospel is proclaimed therefore, it is Absolution, and those who do not believe in it, hear it to their own judgment. The opponents on the other hand imagine that the Gospel brings a treasure only for the penitent. They confuse two things here: the nature and character of the Absolution, and its proper application by the church's ministers. For they must preach the Gospel in such a manner that it is applied to the penitent. What they say about the Gospel is a pitiful doctrine, and their hearers' situation is that of people who have bought a lottery ticket; if they belong to the believers, then the Gospel proclaims God's grace also to them; if not, then the message is not valid for them. They simply do not believe that God is already reconciled with the world, and that the Gospel is nothing other than the proclamation of this upon God's command and an impartation according to His ordinance. When a man has been sentenced to death and the judge acquits him, then the pardon does not consist in this that the judge personally cuts him loose from the gallows, but it consists in this that the judge acquits him, and this acquittal comprises everything else within itself. Thus, when God acquits, then He has also justified through His Word. He therefore who denies that the Gospel is an Absolution of the world, denies the Gospel of Christ in principle; then it is not a glad message, but an instruction about what man himself must do that God might be gracious to him. The Lord expressly says that the Gospel is to be preached in all the world "as a witness upon them." This glad news must be proclaimed therefore whether it be accepted or not, or, as the Apostle says, to the one as a savour of life unto life, to the other as a savour of death unto death. In the opposing doctrine man must always first have faith, before a benefit is present, while God's Word says: Believe, and you have it. Therefore the opposing doctrine is a godless doctrine, which ought to frighten one. What good, with that doctrine, is all invitation to faith? What then am I to believe if nothing is as yet there? But to this thesis there belongs at once the next, of the Absolution.

Thesis 8: "The holy Absolution is a preaching of the Gospel to one or more definite persons, who desire the comfort of the Gospel. Absolution is therefore also at all times valid and powerful (kraeftig--efficacious) in itself, for God therein declares Himself, through the mouth of His servant, as a God truly reconciled through Christ's blood and death, and thus distributes for His part the gift of forgiveness and righteousness to all, who are being absolved, although many do not become partakers of the gifts of grace proffered in the Gospel, on account of their unbelief."

When I hold confession and absolve, I am a truly Lutheran pastor only if I am certain of this: those who were there, I have loosed (geloest), all of them, in the moment in which I said to them the word of the Absolution, and only those are true Lutherans who believe that they were truly acquitted by God. No one is to think: if only the pastor knew what sort of person I am, he would not absolve me; but I know it, and therefore his absolution is not valid. Much rather everyone is to leave the church with this thought: Now God has pardoned us all and forgiven us the debt. Thus of course one can only believe if one believes that the world is redeemed; for if I believe that, then the Absolution is only the imparting of the fact to the penitents

that they were redeemed 1800 years ago, plus the request: Believe this now, then you are all saved. What wicked people you must be if you do not believe this!

Now someone might think: According to this one must absolve also all openly notorious persons, even people like the monkey-advocate. But against this there stands Christ's ordinance: "You shall not give the holy thing to the dogs nor cast the pearl before the sows." Also monkey-advocate (Affen-Vogt) would indeed be truly absolved, if he heard the Gospel; but he would make a joke of it, and tread the benefit underfoot, as the sow a noble pearl. Because we know this of known unbelievers in advance, we do not absolve them, but not as though we believed that they are not redeemed. Oh, if the unbelievers knew and considered this, they would not regard us as clerical, pompous people, who do not mean it well with them. They imagine in fact that we absolve in this sense, because we are ordained gentry, to whom there was granted, in ordination, as through an electrical current, the power to forgive sins, so that, when we say: I forgive you your sins, these are forgiven by virtue of our Absolution. So however teach not we but the papists. They bind the power of the absolution to the tonsured priesthood. But we say: That is no art to absolve someone; that any ordinary Christian man, every woman, every child can do too, if only he can tell that the Lord Jesus died for all and that whoever believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins. For the absolution does not depend on the quality of him who speaks it, but on the Word of the Gospel about the accomplished reconciliation. Therefore it says in the Apology that whoever rejects absolution, does not know what the Gospel is. And Luther says that he makes so much of Absolution just so that people might recognize the Gospel. But the Gospel is the message, to be brought to the lost world, that it is redeemed--a message not as we convey other news, but as one expressly transmitted by the great God in heaven. For this He makes His messengers confident and says: Only preach it confidently, I shall be no liar, but shall make true the Word I give into your mouth. Therefore Luther says: "A preacher cannot open his mouth but that he must speak an Absolution," for as soon as he makes mention of the Lord Christ, it is pure Absolution.

Therefore it is no presumption at all when a Lutheran pastor says that he can absolve. For he does not want to say thereby that the power for this was imparted to him by ordination into the Ministry, as something extraordinary, but rather that the power is that of the Word, which the Ministry committed to him entitles him to preach. But through the reciting and proclaiming the dear God wishes to distribute everything, and our Absolution in confession is only a definite expression, a short summary of what is proclaimed in the sermon, viz., with this difference that it is now addressed especially to the individual. By virtue of the Office here means by virtue of the Gospel which I have been called to preach. So Luther says that with the words: Whosoever sins ye remit, etc., "there is instituted not the power of him who speaks, but of those who believe" (XI, 1002). Therefore one must not say to the penitent: Consider what you are; and if you do not recognize all your sins, and do not have such and such a degree of repentance in respect of these sins, you shall receive no Absolution. But one must put it like this: I now absolve you, thereby the forgiveness of all your sins is freely given you; therefore you are an accursed man if you do not believe this. For this reason it is such a great sin to go to confession and yet not to believe the Word of Absolution. Even if I were the greatest sinner, I must nevertheless, on pain of God's

disfavor, believe this Absolution. Of course, so long as someone is a hardened sinner, he cannot believe the Word; but the fault is not the Absolution's, as though it were not efficacious. Because the Absolution is nothing other than the Gospel, our Fathers did not by any means bind themselves to definite formulas of Absolution. Whichever such formulas they may have used, this is always evident, that they wished to proclaim the Gospel to the sinner, and apply it to him.

There are especially two things to be emphasized here, first that the Gospel is God's offer of grace, as well as that from man's side nothing need be added to make this offer valid. If one makes the Gospel according to its essence dependent on whether man believes, then faith has nothing to which it can cling. But man must have something that he can believe, otherwise he cannot believe at all. If the Gospel now is not valid except that man first believe it, what then is he to believe? In this way one is led to a monkey's tail, as Luther says. That means leading people who stand in fear and have doubt about their salvation, into the torture-mill. Our Augsburg Confession teaches quite differently in Art. 25:

At the same time the people are carefully instructed concerning the consolation of the Word of absolution so that they may esteem absolution as a great and precious thing. It is not the voice or word of the man who speaks it, but it is the Word of God, who forgives sin, for it is spoken in God's stead and by God's command. We teach with great diligence about this command and power of keys and how comforting and necessary it is for terrified consciences. We also teach that God requires us to believe this absolution as much as if we heard God's voice from heaven, that we should joyfully comfort ourselves with absolution, and that we should know that through such faith we obtain forgiveness of sins (Tappert, pp. 61-62).

So then the Absolution is an object for our faith and not a mere pointer to faith. The promise must always stand before our eyes, and in it all terrified souls are to seek consolation and forgiveness and be lifted up by it. On the other hand, if faith must be there first, then faith is made into something quite different from what it really is; it is then no longer a grasping and accepting of the existing benefits. The Apology teaches:

As the second part of penitence we therefore add faith in Christ, that amid these terrors the Gospel of Christ ought to be set forth to consciences--the Gospel which freely promises the forgiveness of sins through Christ. They should believe therefore that because of Christ their sins are freely forgiven. This faith strengthens, sustains, and quickens the contrite according to the passage (Rom. 5:1), "since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God." This faith obtains the forgiveness of sins. This faith justified before God, as the same passage attests, "We are justified by faith." This faith shows the difference between the contrition of Judas and Saul on the one hand and that of Peter and David on the other. The contrition of Judas and Saul did not avail because it lacked the faith

that grasps the forgiveness of sins granted for Christ's sake. The contrition of David and Peter did avail because it had the faith that grasps the forgiveness of sins granted for Christ's sake (Tappert, p. 186).

And in the Large Catechism:

Our know-it-alls, the new spirits, assert that faith alone saves and that works and external things contribute nothing to this end. We answer: It is true, nothing that is in us does it but faith, as we shall hear later on. But these leaders of the blind are unwilling to see that faith must have something to believe--something to which it may cling and upon which it may stand. . . .

Now these people are so foolish as to separate faith from the object to which faith is attached and bound on the ground that the object is something external. Yes, it must be external so that it can be perceived and grasped by the senses and thus brought into the heart, just as the entire Gospel is an external, oral proclamation. In short, whatever God effects in us he does through such external ordinances (Tappert, p. 440).

If someone were to say to the fanatics: Here is bread, but it has a nourishing power only if it is eaten by him who is hungry, or: this medicine has its healing power only when a sick person takes it; then they would themselves realize that this is nonsense. But so also the Gospel has its power not only where a penitent hungerer for grace hears it, but also when it is proclaimed to the godless. That of course is true: he who does not eat the bread, him it does not nourish; who does not take the medicine, him it does not heal; and he who does not believe the Gospel, him it does not comfort. But even a fanatic ought to see that the power of the Word does not lie in man, as little as the nourishing power of bread lies in him.

From the claim that the Gospel and Absolution are not efficacious in the case of the impenitent, the most dreadful consequences follow: Thereby is denied Christ's all-sufficient merit, the redemption and reconciliation of the world, for then faith must always be conceived of as a work which must be added, in order that there might be forgiveness in the Gospel. Then it follows that Christ's merit is not all-sufficient. But if Christ's merit is not all-sufficient, then also Christ is not true God. One could not then with a clear conscience preach the Gospel to anyone or admit him to the Supper, of whom one were not certain that he believes. Now to be sure, as regards the latter, no one is to be admitted to the Sacrament unless he be examined and confess that he believes; but whether he tells the truth or dissimulates I cannot know, for I cannot look into his heart. So I do what God has commanded me, and am certain that I truly absolve all; whether they benefit from it, I do not know. The fact is, however, that a justification is not only made possible, but has been acquired and has occurred.

As we therefore speak of the nature of the Gospel and of Absolution, so God's Word itself speaks of it, that God gives and presents, regardless of whether the matter is accepted or not. Against the opponents of this doctrine

we simply cling to the Word: "If we do not believe, He nevertheless remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself," II Tim. 2:13; "if some do not believe, what of it? Should man's unbelief invalidate God's faithfulness? God forbid," Rom. 3:3,4. According to the opponents' doctrine I would have to reject everything I had ever received, as soon as I began to doubt whether I in fact believed properly at that time. If I had myself baptized today, but a year hence I developed doubts, whether I had properly believed it, I should have to let myself be baptized again. But, thanks be to God, we may console ourselves with certainty of this: what God has done to us, He has done to us forever, and does not undo it from His side; we must only believe. Accursed, however, be the doctrine which makes the dignity, power, and validity of the Absolution dependent on my faith. For that is precisely the poor sinner's consolation, that he knows: the dear God does not deceive me when He speaks with me. If therefore I was heretofore not in the right frame of mind, I shall now comfort myself with this, that God does not repent of His gifts and calling. So my Baptism is valid even if I fall and reject its grace. To be sure, I have then fallen out of the ship into the sea of perdition, but the ship, with everything that can take me to heaven, is still there; I must only get back into the ship and console myself anew with my Baptism. Yes, if it were possible that someone could be godless and yet retain his Baptism, then he would indeed attain heaven; but that of course is an impossibility. This is a very consoling doctrine for the terrified sinner. For it shows him that the devil has no right and power over him, if only he does not cast off the Word.

We cannot emphasize enough, what is said in the Augsburg Confession: the Absolution, which is spoken to me, is always God's Word. This means not only that the words are taken from the Bible, but: When the pastor absolves you, then that is in every case God's Word to you, you can believe that it is God Who speaks to you through the mouth of a poor sinner: as you believe, so be it done to you. As godless as it would be if you hear: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and would not believe this, just so it is godless when you are absolved and you say: That is not true, that forgiveness is here given to me, for I am a great sinner, I do not stand in faith, etc. If the doctrine of the opponents were true, then the unbelievers would be right when they say: "Bah, what do we care what the priest says?" For then it would indeed be but an empty Word. But now their talk is so terrible for this very reason, because it is God's Absolution which they despise and ridicule. As gold remains gold even when it is stolen or trampled into the mud, so the Absolution remains Absolution, even when it is despised by unbelievers. Just as prisoners who hear that they are pardoned, and say: But we like it here in prison; are nevertheless pardoned, so too they are absolved who do not accept the Word and what it brings. For the great King, God the Lord, has pardoned the world, and has sent out His servants to carry this message to men. Therefore Luther writes so gloriously:

Consequently, there must lie hidden in the keys of Christ his blood, death, and resurrection, by which he has opened to us heaven, and thus imparts through the keys to poor sinners what he has wrought through his blood. . . .

Remember that the keys or the forgiveness of sins are not based on our own repentance or worthiness, as they wrongly teach. Such teachings are entirely Pelagian, Mohammedan (Tuerkisch),

pagan, Jewish, like those of the Anabaptists, fanatics, and anti-Christian. On the contrary our repentance and work, our disposition and all we are, should be built on the keys. We are to depend on them with as daring confidence as on God's Word itself. You must never doubt what the keys say and give you, at the risk of losing both body and soul. It is as certain as if God himself were saying so, which indeed he does. It is his own Word and command. But if you doubt the same you make God a liar. You pervert his order and base his keys on your own repentance and worthiness. You should, indeed, repent. But to make repentance the basis of the forgiveness of your sins and of corroborating the work of the keys, is to abandon faith and deny Christ. By means of the key, he will forgive your sins, not for your own sake but for his own name's sake, out of pure grace. . . .

Do not allow yourself to be led astray by this Pharisaic babbling by which some deceive themselves, saying, "How can a man forgive sins when he can bestow neither grace nor the Holy Spirit?" Rely on the words of Christ and be assured that God has no other way to forgive sins than through the spoken Word, as he has commanded us. If you do not look for forgiveness through the Word, you will gape toward heaven in vain for grace, or (as they say), for a sense of inner forgiveness.

But if you speak as the factious spirits and sophists do: "After all, many hear of the binding and loosing of the keys, yet it makes no impression on them and they remain unbound and without being loosed. Hence, there must exist something else beside the Word and the keys. It is the spirit, the spirit, yes, the spirit that does it! Do you believe he is not bound who does not believe in the key which binds? Indeed, he shall learn, in due time, that his unbelief did not make the binding vain, nor did it fail in its purpose. Even he who does not believe that he is free and his sins forgiven shall also learn, in due time, how assuredly his sins were forgiven, even though he did not believe it. St. Paul says in Rom. 3: "Their faithlessness nullifies not the faithfulness of God." We are not talking here either about people's belief or disbelief regarding the efficacy of the keys. We realize that few believe. We are speaking of what the keys accomplish and give. He who does not accept what the keys give receives of course nothing. But this is not the key's fault. Many do not believe the gospel, but this does not mean that the gospel is not true or effective. A king gives you a castle. If you do not accept it, then it is not the king's fault, nor is he guilty of a lie. But you have deceived yourself and the fault is yours. The king certainly gave it.

Well, you say, here you yourself teach that the key fails. For the keys do not accomplish their purpose when some do not believe nor accept. Well, friend, if

you call this failing, then God fails in all his words and works. For few accept what he constantly speaks and does for all. This means doing violence to the proper meaning of words. I do not call it a failure or a mistake if I say or do something, and somebody else despises or ignores it. But so they understand, teach, and observe concerning the pope's wrong key: The key itself can err, even though a person would like to accept and rely on it. For it is a conditionalis clavis, a conditional, a vacillating key which does not direct us to God's Word, but to our own repentance. It does not say candidly and boldly that you are to believe that I most certainly loose you. But it says that if you are repentant and pious, I loose you, if not, then I fail. That is the clavis errans, the erring key. It cannot with any assurance say that I know for certain that I have loosed you before God, whether you believe it or not, as St. Peter's key can say. But it must say something like this, that I loose you on earth, but I really and truly do not know whether you are loosed before God. For faith has not been taught in connection with the keys, as one clearly sees in the bulls of indulgence wherein repentance and confession and money are required but nothing is ever said of faith.

This is quite evident, for they neither repent of nor punish such deceitful uncertainties, among themselves or in others. They proceed confidently as if such doubting were no sin at all, reasoning thus: It makes no difference whether I have hit the mark; if I have missed the mark, I have missed it. They display no compunction of conscience or worry on account of such unbelief. Yet it is an abominable unbelief on the part of both him who binds and looses as well as on the part of him who is being bound and loosed. For it is God's Word and command that the former speaks and the latter listens. Both are bound, on peril of losing their soul's salvation, to believe this article as truly and firmly as all other articles of faith. For he who binds and looses without faith, and doubts whether he succeeds in binding and loosing rightly, or thinks to himself quite unconcernedly, well, if the key hits the mark, it hits the mark, that man blasphemes God and denies Christ, tramples the keys underfoot, and is worse than a heathen, Turk, or Jew. He also who is bound or loosed, blasphemes God, and denies Christ if he does not believe but doubts and despises what is done. For one ought and must believe God's Word with all seriousness and confidence. He who does not believe should leave the keys alone. He should rather dwell with Judas and Herod in hell, for God does not want to be reviled by our unbelief. It is truly not everybody's business to use the keys rightly.

Again, he who believes or would gladly believe that the keys are doing their work effectively, let him rejoice and use them with confidence. The greatest honor you can bestow on God and his keys is to trust in them. It is for that reason we teach our people that he who is bound or loosed by means of the key, let him rather die ten deaths than doubt their efficacy. No greater dishonor can be done to God's Word and judgment than lack of faith in the same. For this means as much as to say: God, you are a liar. It is not true what you say. I do not believe it. Hence God must be a prevaricator. He who binds and looses must be equally as certain, otherwise he is guilty of similar abominations. But where has one ever taught or heard of such a thing under the papacy? Indeed, if it had been taught, the wrong keys and their companions would never have come into being. And these two keys would have been the only ones and would have remained pure and unspotted. How many bishops and their representatives use the keys in this fashion? They do not believe the judgment of the keys is God's Word. They are in the habit of treating them as if they were of an ancient, worldly origin. But if they were to believe that it was the judgment of God in which they themselves should first of all have faith, at the risk of endangering their souls' salvation, they would not treat it so thoughtlessly but rather with fear and trembling (Luther's Works, American Edition, vol. 40, pp. 328, 364, 366-369).

Thesis 9: "The means, through which alone man comes into actual possession of the gift of grace acquired by Christ and proffered in Word and Sacrament, is faith, which believes God's promise of grace and thus appropriates to itself the gift of the merit and righteousness of Christ offered in this promise of God, and comforts itself with the benefit of Christ as his Sin-canceller and Savior."

A precious text to this point is Rom. 4:16: "Therefore righteousness must come through faith, in order that it might be by grace, and the promise remain sure to all the seed." Hereby the Apostle Paul testifies that faith is not, let us say, a condition, which must be fulfilled from our side, if we want to become partakers of the salvation which Christ has acquired for us. No, he wants to say that when God requires faith of us He does not say thereby: My Son has indeed made satisfaction for you and redeemed the world, but now you too must do something. On the contrary, it is like this: Just because we need do nothing at all any longer for our salvation, therefore faith is necessary. If of course righteousness were not of grace, then something else would have to be required to obtain it; but since it is of grace, therefore faith is enough, for it is simply an acceptance.

If someone promises to give me something, what else can I do than believe it? Love does not help towards this, nor does thinking about it, or sanctification. All this does not correspond to the nature of a free gift, viz., that it might come into my possession, but only this, that I accept it. But this is

just what faith is. Here I accept as true that God has given this promise to me, me, me. There once came to see Dr. Luther a woman suffering great affliction. She said that she could not believe that she would be saved, but thought she would needs be lost. Luther then had the Second Article of the Small Catechism recited to her, and asked her whether she could believe that. When she affirmed this, he let her go and said: If you believe this, then it is well with you. And indeed, he who can say this: "I believe in Jesus Christ . . . Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil," he has life and salvation.

With this statement there is also repudiated the papistic delusion, as though faith were a sort of virtue alongside of love and hope, and the fanatical (*schwaermerische*) delusion, as though it were faith as a change in the heart of man which rendered man acceptable to God, so that God were pleased with man for the sake of faith. No, it is not faith which gives man value before God, but Christ, Whom faith embraces. It is as with a plain ring, into which a diamond is set. Whence now does it have its high value? It lies not, in the ring, but in the jewel set in it. So also it is with faith, which embraces Christ and thereby has a saving treasure in itself. The Formula of Concord speaks about it like this:

The Holy Spirit offers these treasures to us in the promise of the Gospel, and faith is the only means whereby we can apprehend, accept, apply them to ourselves, and make them our own. Faith is a gift of God whereby we rightly learn to know Christ as our Redeemer in the Word of the Gospel and to trust in Him, that solely for the sake of his obedience we have forgiveness of sins by grace, are accounted righteous and holy by God the Father, and are saved forever. . . .

For faith does not justify because it is so good a work and so God-pleasing a virtue, but because it lays hold on and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy Gospel. This merit has to be applied to us and to be made our own through faith if we are to be justified thereby. Therefore the righteousness which by grace is reckoned to faith or to the believers is the obedience, the passion, and the resurrection of Christ when he satisfied the law for us and paid for our sin. . . .

This righteousness is offered to us by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and in the Sacraments, and is applied, appropriated, and accepted by faith, so that thus believers have reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, and grace of God, adoption, and the inheritance of eternal life (FC SD III, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, Tappert, p. 541).

So then, the expression, "we become righteous through faith," is a metonymy; that is, the container is here named in place of the content. What is meant is: we become righteous through Christ, Whom faith embraces. As it is said, "someone is nourished by eating," and yet it is the food that nourishes him, not the eating. So we say to him who hungers spiritually: If you want to be saved, you must take what the Lord offers you, but the taking does not still

his soul, but rather grace. So faith without Christ is worth nothing, and it is only faith in Christ which makes righteous.

There is something further, which will need to be stressed yet more in our time, viz., that faith too is nothing but a gracious gift of God. Man, says the Formula of Concord, behaves in his conversion mere passive, i.e. only receptively. He does nothing, but something is done to him, and only when the dear God has generated faith in us, can man begin to cooperate. In recent times, however, the Iowa Synod people have openly expressed the doctrine that the final decision in being saved lies ultimately with man. They say that it is indeed true that man is saved by grace; but that when God offers grace, then man can provisionally have so much grace that he can now cooperate and decide for himself. By grace, they say, man's will is liberated to the extent that he can freely decide for acceptance or rejection of grace, so that man therefore is saved by faithful use of the offered power of grace. Of course, according to our own reason we cannot conclude otherwise than like this: When some accept grace and others not, whilst all lie in equal impotence and guilt, then the explanation must be that the former are better, because they decide in favor of acceptance of the benefits. But God's Word declares that condemnation comes upon man by reason of his own guilty hardening of himself, but that faith on the other hand is a free gift of God's grace, through which man appropriates the righteousness of Christ.

Thesis 10: "Faith in Christ therefore makes righteous and saves, not because it obtains such an exceeding reward with God as a splendid work of man, and as satisfaction for sin reconciling God with men, but because it is, from man's side, the taking hand, which actually grasps and accepts the treasure of the merit of Christ and thus of forgiveness, righteousness, and salvation, which are proffered and given in the promise of grace. Nor does faith justify and save before God because God is willing, out of free grace and love, to let it count as a meritorious work of righteousness and of obedience to God's Word, but because the treasure of the merit of Christ, which even the weakest faith grasps in the promise of the Gospel, embraces in itself truly a perfect satisfaction for all guilt and punishment of sin, as well as a perfect obedience towards all requirements of the Law of God."

This statement has been added to the former one because beside the false doctrine that faith is such a high, meritorious work, there is to be repudiated yet a further false doctrine of the Arminians, who say: The grace of God consists just in this, that He will let this faith count for so much as to save the believer on this account. Against this it must be firmly maintained that even the weakest faith, and were it only a tiny spark, so long as it only remains faith, has Christ with His entire merit, just because it grasps Christ, Who has rendered such a perfect obedience and has through Himself accomplished so complete a Redemption, that whoever has Him is perfectly saved. Now it makes no difference whether someone holds a jewel with the strong hand of a healthy man or with the weak finger of a sick child--if only he holds it.

Thesis 11: "The faith of the individual does not by its power bring it about that the evangelical promise of grace, which God speaks in the Word of the Gospel or Absolution, becomes really valid, efficacious, and true, but it simply clings to the promise of grace and forgiveness as a divinely true and

efficacious one, and by thus accepting the promise of God, it thereby at the same time grasps the gift of righteousness and salvation, and has what the words say and express."

The matter which here comes to expression has been treated at length already in connection with the previous thesis, viz., that faith does not supply content to the Gospel and Absolution. The office of faith is not to supply content, but rather to take out the content which God has placed into the Means of Grace. Therefore the usage, "on account of, or for the sake of faith," is never to be found in Scripture, but always: "through or out of faith." Here too belong all the passages of the Book of Concord in which it is said that the Gospel is of no avail without faith, although the treasure is surpassing. For it is one thing, that the treasure is there, and another, that it be of some use.

Thesis 12: "When an individual sinner through faith grasps the promise of the Gospel in Word or Sacrament, and thus appropriates to himself the treasure of the merit of Christ for his justification and salvation, then he is also regarded, accounted, and declared to be such by God as in a forensic action before the judgment seat of God, so that the sinner now for his own person has part in the merit and the righteousness of Christ for his salvation, and is thus also personally righteous and an heir of eternal life through the personal possession of the benefit of Christ."

The intention of this thesis is to make plain that, although we teach that forgiveness of sins has been acquired for all men and that righteousness and salvation are, according to the acquisition, available (vorhanden--in existence) for all men, and although we also teach, for another thing, that this treasure is also offered and presented to all in Word and Sacrament, we nevertheless do not deny, that God in Christ and through Christ regards an individual, if only he accepts this treasure, as one who has this righteousness, and that he is at that same hour, so to speak, written into the Book of Life, and that this is the justification which is in ecclesiastical usage simply called the justification of a poor sinner, because here every individual stands before God in judgment and is acquitted by Him for his person. This actus forensis, i.e. juridical dealing, continues throughout the whole life of man, for God is always anew declaring man free from sin, death, and judgment. So we teach: when the individual believer partakes of the treasure which Christ has acquired, then God also lets this be valid in His judgment, since he has entered into Christ, as the Apostle says: "So there is nothing condemnable in them who are in Christ Jesus;" now he has a part in the redemption, which Christ has acquired. Before faith the sinner is righteous before God only according to the acquisition and the divine intention, but actually (actu) righteous, righteous for his own person, righteous in fact (tatsaechlich--factually) he is only when he believes. It is similar to the reconciliation. God is reconciled with us before we believe, when we are still enemies. But when we come to faith, we too are reconciled with God. So e.g. Quenstedt says: As Christ reconciled us with God through his death, so he reconciles us with God by virtue of his death, by converting us through the Word of the Cross. For a man's conversion consists just in this that he is brought to faith. Thereby we are reconciled with God, after God is reconciled with us through Christ's death. In the Formula of Concord it says therefore: "'The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all

sin' (I John 1:7). This does not refer only to the merit that was once achieved on the cross. John is saying in this passage that in the work or matter of our justification not only the divine nature in Christ but also his blood actually cleanses us from all sins" (SD VIII, 59, Tappert, p. 602).

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Translator's Notes

1. This is a translation--perhaps a little wooden, for the sake of literal precision--of the essay on Justification presented and adopted at the first Synodical Conference Convention in 1872, Proceedings, pp. 20-68. Written probably by F. A. Schmidt, who later became virulently anti-Missourian, this important essay is favorably cited and appealed to in F. Bente's tripartite "Die neue und die alte Lehre der Ohio-Synode von der allgemeinen Rechtfertigung," Lehre und Wehre, vol. 51, no. 9, Sept. 1905, pp. 385ff. All underlinings follow the original.

2. Although the word "allgemein" can be rendered as "general," I have given it as "universal" in all contexts to do with redemption, reconciliation, justification, etc. "Vollkommen" or "vollgueltig" in this context I have rendered as "perfect," "accomplished," or "completed." The German "Schuld" becomes in English either "guilt" or "debt," depending on the context.

Citations from the Confessions are given with Tappert instead of Mueller pagination. The long Luther quote is given in the American Edition version.

3. It is clear that the content of objective justification, as understood throughout this essay, is not a matter of a technical point between Norwegians and Swedes, but comprises the central thrust of biblical, confessional teaching (Thesis 3) as distinct from Romanism on the one hand and Calvinism on the other. Objective justification is here understood as the assertion of grace alone against Romanists and synergists, of universal grace against the Calvinists, and of the means of grace against both. Or one may say that "grace alone" means the intensive perfection of Christ's redemption, and "universal grace" its extensive perfection.

4. Behind this (Lutheran) mode of teaching there stands the language of the Luther Bible, and Luther's grand equations: Grace equals forgiveness equals justification equals redemption equals reconciliation equals propitiation. These are theological not philological equivalents. Of course the words "propitiation," "redemption," and the rest, mean different things--but they refer to the same theological reality, though from different angles or aspects of it. This is not scholarly carelessness on Luther's part, but pastoral meat-and-potatoes orientation. Impatient with everything frilly and pedantic, Luther concentrates massively on the Gospel essentials--and with him the Lutheran church.

5. The precipitating cause of the argument in 19th century American Lutheranism was the question about Absolution--hence the long Thesis 8. What is at stake here--whether Absolution actually conveys forgiveness or merely informs or reminds one of it--is again central to the whole biblical, Lutheran scheme. Lutheran doctrine is not a loose collection of ill-fitting pieces, but a grand unity, a holistic Gestalt, which asserts the solid, reliable objectivity of God's saving action in Christ and His means of grace, against the rival Gestalten of Romanism and Calvinism, both of which tend ultimately to mysticism, subjectivism, and enthusiasm.

6. Where grace alone, universal grace, and efficacious means of grace are fully maintained against both Rome and Geneva, there objective justification is actually confessed, whatever the particular terminology used. Conversely, where the substance of objective or general justification is attacked--whatever the words used--there either grace alone or universal grace or the means of grace or all of these are under attack.

7. Terminology like "universal justification" can also be abused, and therefore one must keep clearly in mind certain distinctions and explanations and to avoid one-sided overstatements (e.g. "all the damned in hell receive the status of pure, forgiven saints and children of God")! The essay specifically suggests that some of the terminology of the orthodox Norwegians was "perhaps a bit awkward" (p. 22 above). The essay repeatedly points to the "middle way" (Rohrberg, p. 23 above), that is to proper distinctions like Quistorp's: "Thus all are justified and some are justified. All, in respect of the acquired merit, some, in respect of the appropriated merit" (p. 21). See also Thesis 12. Note also the terminological uncertainties on pages 20, 28-29.

8. On the basis of the above one may, without waxing overly subtle, venture to distinguish at least six levels of meaning within the term "justification."

- I. All sins are imputed to Christ, the Lamb of God, Who suffers and dies for them--and thereby and in that sense these sins are removed from mankind.
- II. Jesus--and in Him sinful mankind whose sins He bore--is publicly acquitted, vindicated, justified in His resurrection--hence the stress on I Tim. 3:16.
- III. The verdict of acquittal, i.e. justification, is really and effectively conveyed to all and sundry in and by the Gospel; i.e. Word, Sacrament, Absolution.
- IV. Man accepts this verdict by faith, and this faith is imputed to him for righteousness--this is "subjective justification," or the normal biblical and ecclesiastical usage of the word "justification" (see Thesis 12).
- V. The "external justification before men" by means of good works (Pieper II, Justification by Faith, Section 8).
- VI. The final verdict of justification on Judgment Day.

Levels I-III are what is meant by objective or general justification. The stress on the once-and-for-all-ness of the resurrection-victory at Level II is soundly biblical (Col. 2:14,15) and confessional (Apol. IV, 103-105, Tappert, pp. 121-122).

There is here the tension between the "already" and the "not yet"--thus death has been defeated (II Tim. 1:10), and yet remains still to be defeated at the end of time (I Cor. 15:26, 54-56--but then v. 57!).

9. Above all, one must distinguish between the Law, which is valid for all men, and by which God does His "alien" work of terrifying sinners (to drive them to the Gospel), and the Gospel, which is valid for all men as God's "proper" work of saving sinners for Christ's sake (Apol. XII, 49-55, Tappert, pp. 188-189). Therefore: "He that believeth on the Son has everlasting life, and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (St. John 3:36). As long as our theology remains that of pilgrims and wayfarers (viatorum) we cannot--and dare not--cleverly weave Law and Gospel together into some sort of "higher unity."

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